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CHAPTER XXXVII.

WAS ever any man quite satisfied with the *dénouement* of a drama played on his own life's little stage? We are inclined to think not.

When the thrill of excitement caused by the last act dies away, and the curtain falls, then it is that a vague sense of expectations unfulfilled takes possession of the heart and fills the breast with pain and discontent.

Most of the ends at which poor humanity aim are marred by unforeseen events, and seldom reach ultimate perfection.

Some tourist fondly hopes that when he has reached a far distant height the broad landscape will lie open and clear before his enraptured vision; but when that height is gained he finds, to his sore disappointment, that mist and cloud obscures the prospect.

We pursue some object, it may be love or ambition, in the firm belief that when attained our happiness will be complete, and lo! we find it only brings us care and sore disquiet. The heart of man is never fully satisfied, perhaps never will be this side the grave.

Some turn for comfort to good works, and give with open-handed charity. Alas, they soon find that the recipients of their bounty know full well that it is much more blessed to give than to receive, and treat the donor accordingly.

Or it may be that we have set our hearts on loving and caring for some one, that we consider no sacrifice too great on our part to render them happy, until at length we find that all our efforts

are unavailing, and that our ideas and likings are as far asunder as the poles.

Something like this, in a vague sort of way, passed through the mind of Horace Merryman after his first interview with Alice.

For months he had sought after her and her child. He had planned a hundred things in his mind during this weary search to conduce to her happiness should he ever be fortunate enough to find her.

He had always pictured Alice to himself as a pale, drooping woman, needing support and comfort—a gentle, meek creature craving for sympathy and grateful for kindness.

A woman to whom a quiet fireside would prove a haven of rest, and a home she could call her own quite an ark of refuge.

He had looked out a pretty cottage in his rambles; he had even gone over it and lingered before it planning out a peaceful future beneath its humble roof.

That, he thought, would be just the sort of home for Alice and her child. They should live with him. How nice it would be for him to come home of an evening, after his day's work was done, and find some one to welcome him with a loving smile.

He heard long ago that Alice had brought shame to the family and broken her mother's heart. Still, she had erred through ignorance and blind confidence in the man she loved. It was not for him to cast a stone at her, but to bind up the broken spirit of his much-wronged relative.

She should be to him as a daughter. It would be happiness for him to spend his last days with one of his own kindred.

But the Alice of his dreams and the Alice of reality were entirely different beings. He might as well take a stormy petrel to his home and try to tame it in a cage as to think of winning Alice back to quiet domestic life.

It did not give him unqualified satisfaction, either, to find she was the widow of the late Lord Chineron.

He knew the history of that noble family well—indeed, he was well up in the peerage generally, so that he was well aware that a marriage had taken place between the Earl of Chineron and a grand-daughter of the Duchess of Morton some few years since, and that the supposed widow and her son were now in possession of the deceased nobleman's estate.

On the other hand Alice was poor and friendless, and even if

she should succeed in getting some one eminent in the law to put forward her claim, she would have a hard fight to regain her rightful position.

It was not in the nature of things that two noble houses should accept such a crushing disgrace without a struggle.

The Dowager Countess of Chineron must, by some means, have become aware of the existence of that pocket-book intrusted to his care; hence her stealthy visit to his employer's private rooms. How she had gained access to these rooms was still one of the mysteries that the old clerk found it impossible to solve.

Alice he knew would fight the matter out to the bitter end, although rank and wealth would be arrayed against her. There would be no compromise, he felt certain, between the revengeful and much-wronged Alice and the haughty Dowager Lady Chineron.

He began to feel, as Alex Cameron had done before him, that the burden laid on his shoulders was a heavy one, yet he did not shrink, as Alex had done, from putting his shoulder to the wheel.

He was still leaning with his head bent on his hands, buried in deep thought, when Alice swept into the office like a tornado, and, throwing herself on a chair, burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, with Freda, also weeping, clinging to her neck.

Utterly bewildered, Merryman sat staring at her like one stunned. He could not comprehend such wild bursts of long pent-up emotion.

However, he did what he considered best under the circumstances. Having heard Mrs. Limber call for sal volatile when labouring under extra excitement, he hurried away to the nearest chemist to obtain some.

When he returned with some ready mixed in a glass of water he found Alice more composed. She began to make excuses for her weakness, and told him that she had been quite overcome by seeing Freda almost carried off by a strange woman, and that she had only arrived in the nick of time to rescue her from her clutches.

The old man looked grave and shook his head. "Did you not leave her in the care of Mrs. Trimble?" he asked.

"Ah, in my excitement I had quite forgotten that," cried Alice with an uneasy look. "I cannot believe Mrs. Trimble would betray her trust."

"Ask Freda how it came about," said he, with the air of a man who likes to understand the case before he offers an opinion.

Freda related very distinctly all she knew about the matter, which was not much. A man and woman came into the room shortly after Alice left, and said to Mrs. Trimble that some one wanted her downstairs; that after exchanging a few words with them Mrs. Trimble left the room, bidding Freda not to stir until she returned; that she had not been gone long when a strange woman came and told her to put on her things, as she wanted to take her to her mamma; that she was very cross because she refused and said she must wait till Mrs. Trimble came back; and that the woman frightened her so, she went and got her hat and cloak, but she didn't want to go with her, so the woman took her by the hand and pulled her out of the room and downstairs.

"This is very strange," said Mr. Merryman reflectively. "How did Mrs. Trimble find you out, Alice?"

A shade crossed the brow of Alice; her eyes glistened. "I think I understand it now," she said with compressed lips.

Then she related the circumstance of Doctor Pounceford's visit, and his returning the next day with two other gentlemen on pretence of holding a consultation on Freda's case; and how that she had met Mrs. Trimble, as if by accident, close to her door that morning, when she found it impossible to shake her off, and at length consented to take her to her lodgings and leave Freda in her charge.

"It looks like a case of conspiracy to get Freda into their possession," he said with knitted brows. The sweet, gentle child had won the sympathy that her mother had failed to call forth from the old man's soul. She was high-born and an heiress; no rude hand should touch her, if his arm could defend her, even to the death.

It was not that she was of his kindred, strange as that may seem, that the old man swore fealty in his heart towards her. No, she was lovely and sweet as a spring flower, and no one should flitch her birthright from her, were they never so high and mighty. When he had put her firmly in possession of her heritage, he would retire at a distance and joy in her greatness far more than he would were that greatness his own.

"I do not like to suspect Mrs. Trimble; she proved such a

true friend in my distress," said Alice after a little reflection. "I don't think she would harm one hair of Freda's head."

"You will have to be wary, Alice," said Mr. Merryman slowly and reflectively. "A great lady came here once before, to inquire for Freda, and charged Mrs. Trimby that if she found her she was to let her know. I think the Trimblys are honest, well-meaning people, and if Mrs. Trimby did tell that great lady where Freda was, she did it in the simplicity of her heart. Still, you will have to be wary, even of your best friends. Once Freda is in the power of certain great folks, your case is hopeless. What could you do, poor and friendless as you are? You might assert your right to be called 'my lady,' but you would find it a barren honour. You have no settlement, and if the lawyers could not see their way to be well feed, they would be slow to take up your case. But Freda is her father's heiress; we will soon get some one to pave the way to her inheritance."

"Alas, I know too well I am powerless!" said Alice, with a pitiful gesture of helplessness that went to the old man's heart at once. "My enemies have ever been too potent to work me evil, but you know the intricacies of the law and you will help us, will you not?"

Merryman assured her that he would see an eminent lawyer without delay, but his first care would be to see her and Freda to a place of safety.

Alice suggested that she should take Freda to Margate for a change; it was not likely that any one would track them there, she thought. She had some twenty pounds left that would serve for their wants for a month or two, at least.

Mr. Merryman, generally so dull of comprehension and slow to act, seemed wonderfully roused into action, now that others depended on his forethought and care. He decided that it was too late to start for the sea-coast that evening, that they would require a little rest after the excitement they had gone through, and therefore, Alice and Freda had better go home with him and remain for the night at his lodgings.

"Mrs. Limber is a very genteel person," said he, "and she happens to have a room vacant at present. A young German lady who sang at concerts left about a week since, and you can have the room she occupied, and board with the family."

This appeared a very suitable arrangement, at least for the

present, and Alice readily agreed to the proposal. Withal that her air was defiant and her appearance gaunt and far from prepossessing, Alice had much that was clinging and womanly about her still. The old man little thought how glad she was to find a relative, after so many years of loneliness, who was willing to befriend her.

"What name shall I give Mrs. Limber? she is so genteel in her manners that I am bound to introduce you," said the old man, quite in a deferential manner. He rather entertained a dread of rousing Alice's temper and seeing her eye flash.

"Chineron," replied Alice proudly; "from this day forth I will be known by no other."

They were just alighting from the train at Upper Holloway Station when Mr. Merryman asked the above question. Alice's answer took him rather aback; he looked at her gaunt figure and shabby attire; it was not in the fitness of things that he should introduce her as a lady of title.

Alice observed him scanning her dress dubiously. "I don't look much like a countess, do I?" she said with a laugh that was almost light-hearted and cheered the old man to hear. "I don't suppose your genteel landlady would believe you if you introduced me as one, and poor little Freda, in her threadbare frock and mantle, looks more like the child of a poor seamstress than the heiress to untold wealth; nevertheless our name is Chineron."

"But hadn't we better be cautious?" ventured the old clerk. "Your enemies are on the alert already, and they are powerful, if not all powerful."

"No matter," replied Alice firmly, if not a little defiantly. "We will take our lawful name in spite of them! But, my dear uncle, don't think me so silly as to wish to be dubbed 'my lady' in my present mean condition. Say I am your niece and that my name is Chineron; trust me, no one will call either Freda or myself 'my lady' whilst we walk about in threadbare garments and mended shoes."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was late on the following morning when Horace Merryman arrived at Temple Bar by the Hornsey 'bus. On nearing the porter's lodge, on his way to Elm Court, he was surprised to find two or three policemen standing about.

To stop and, in common parlance, ask what was up? was but natural on the part of the old clerk.

"Case of some one missing since yesterday afternoon," replied one of the policemen, who knew Merryman and therefore deigned to be communicative.

"Some one missing! Who is it? Not one of your boys, I hope, Trimble?" said the old clerk, addressing the latter part of the question to the gate porter.

Trimble uttered a groan that sounded very like the dull subterraneous echo in the vaults of the Pantheon.

"'Tis his wife!" whispered the communicative policeman behind his hand. "Went out yesterday after dinner and haven't returned since."

Mr. Merryman's eyes opened to their widest extent at this discovery. "Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Well, that's odd."

"She'll never darken my doors again, unless we find her in a hospital!" said Trimble, raising his head and showing a face so savage and altered that Mr. Merryman scarcely recognized him. Poor Trimble, he certainly thought his wife had eloped with some gay young Lothario. He had lost all confidence in the partner of his life since he found that she had deceived him concerning the paternity of Freda, and like all slow natures, once he took a prejudice against any one it was no easy matter to regain his confidence.

"Why, man, you don't want to find your wife with broken bones in some hospital ward, do you?" said Mr. Merryman, slow to perceive that the gate porter was jealous of his middle-aged, plain-looking wife.

"I'd rather find her dead than a disgrace to her children," replied Trimble, with a terrible scowl.

"Oh, there's no fear of your wife going wrong," said Merryman in a matter-of-fact sort of way. "When she left home yesterday did she tell you that she was going to call on a friend in Dean Street?"

"No, she did not!" exclaimed Trimble, starting to his feet and seizing the old clerk by the arm. "Who was the friend, sir? I never heard of him."

Mr. Merryman could not forbear a smile; the idea of staid, homely Mrs. Trimble keeping an assignation with a lover tickled even his dull humour. He hastened to explain—and all

the more readily when he found Trimby's grasp on his arm becoming a grip of iron—that it was a female friend Mrs. Trimby had called on, and that it would be advisable for one of the officers to go on to Dean Street and make inquiries immediately.

"Well, I'm glad we've got some clue to follow up," said one of the men, a police sergeant; "we'd be glad to have any information you could give us, sir, about the missing lady."

Mr. Merryman readily gave what information he was in possession of, which was of course but little; however, the police sergeant thought fit to act on it, and started off for Dean Street, to make inquiries, accompanied by one of the policemen.

"She went away with a man and a woman, you say?" questioned Trimby, who, like the Moor, still harped on his wife's supposed unfaithfulness. "Now, why, I ask, should she go away with that man?"

"There's more in this than you or I suspect," replied Merryman thoughtfully; "although why your wife should stay away from her home all night, without sending you word, is more than I can make out."

Trimby uttered another hollow groan and sank back in his seat; all his thoughts had taken complexion from his jealous fears. She had certainly eloped *with that man*, and left her husband and family without one word of regret or farewell. Mr. Merryman, having no sort of sympathy for the jealous husband, uttered a sound very like, "Bosh!" and proceeded on his way to his office. He had not gone far, however, when the sound of hurrying footsteps and short hysterical sobs made him pause and look back.

Mrs. Trimby, tearful and dishevelled, was hastening to throw herself into the arms of her doubting spouse.

With more curiosity than discretion, Mr. Merryman turned back to witness the result.

The good woman had fallen on her husband's neck in quite a melodramatic fashion, but Trimby was not to be softened by such female blandishments. His face was a study for an actor wanting to act Othello true to nature: dark, scowling, unrelenting and full of tragic purpose.

"Oh, Davy—Davy—haven't you a word of welcome home for your own wife?" Mrs. Trimby was sobbing, as Mr. Merry-

man came within hearing, and David, not trusting himself to speak, had pushed her from him and folded his arms to keep her at bay.

"I'm glad to see you home again," said the old clerk, like another Paul Pry, popping his head in at the lodge door. "What happened to you, Mrs. Trimble, that you stayed away all night and nearly frightened your good man here into fits?"

"Ay, that's the question, woman—where have you been since yesterday afternoon, eh?" asked Trimble, in a voice that would have made his fortune on the stage, it was so deep and hollow, and withal so full of fearful import.

"Where have I been? Oh, Davy, Davy, if you only knew, I think you'd murder the man as took me there!" cried Mrs. Trimble in high excitement.

"No, woman; I shall do no murder for the likes of you!" said the inexorable husband, in the same hollow voice and with that fearful scowl on his brow, his arms still folded on his breast. "No, you shall not incite me to murder! Go your ways—go back to that party as enticed you from your home an' family an' never darken my doors again!"

"Merciful heaven!" cried Mrs. Trimble, looking ready to faint. "What's come over you, Davy? Go back to that party—go back to a madhouse?"

David Trimble stared at his wife, opened his mouth to speak, but failed to utter a word; then he sank down on the nearest seat, nerveless, unstrung, trembling in every limb.

"Heigh-ho!" ejaculated the old clerk, opening his eyes to their utmost width. "You don't mean to say that, do you?"

"I do say as how I'm shamefully used!" replied Mrs. Trimble, her temper rising. "Here have I been treated as no respectable married female ever was before, an' when I come home expecting as how Trimble there would be overjoyed at seeing the wife of his bosom once more, he just about disowns me an' treats me crueller nor a Turk! Oh, Davy—Davy—how can you? Here Mrs. Trimble broke down and wept sorely.

"Better not give way, ma'am," said Mr. Merryman soothingly. "It's all a mistake. You see your good man thinks you are still young and handsome enough to captivate any gay young spark—and jealousy is cruel as the grave, you know, ma'am."

"Lor' a mercy, Davy! how could you be so foolish?" cried

his wife, smiling through her tears. "An' I daresay you are glad enough to see me back again, after all—ain't you, Davy, old man?"

But David only gazed at her open-mouthed, quite too wonder-stricken to reply or utter one word.

Mr. Merryman, who was all impatience to hear Mrs. Trimble's account of her night's incarceration in a madhouse, at length induced her and her husband to come with him to his employer's chambers, where, as he remarked, she could relate her strange adventures at her ease.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"WELL, as you know, I was left in care of Freda," went on Mrs. Trimble, after relating how she had met Alice quite by accident in Dean Street, "an' I was sitting with that dear child in my lap when a knock came to the door, an' before I'd time to say, 'Come in,' a man opened it an' entered the room, closely followed by a female of most respectable appearance.

"'Will you come down stairs, please, ma'am ; some one wants to speak to you?' said the female, quite polite an' respectful.

"'Some one wants me! Are you sure? Did they say they wanted to speak with Mrs. Trimble?' I asked, thinking she had made a mistake an' come into the wrong room.

"'Oh, it's all right,' said the man, 'an' if you'll make haste, the person as wants to see you will feel obliged ; she won't keep you a minute.'

"Well, as I didn't think any harm could happen by my going down to the door, I set Freda down in a chair an' followed the man down stairs, the female coming close after me.

"When I reached the front door there was a carriage standing before it, an' a person looked out an' asked, 'Is it all right?'

"'That's the person as wants to speak to you,' said the female, pushing me towards the carriage whilst the man opened the door.

"There were about a dozen people gathered about the house, attracted by the sight of a carriage an' pair, an' waiting to see what might turn up.

"'I think it's some mistake,' says I, when I observed that the person in the carriage was a perfect stranger to me. 'Oh, no, it's right, ma'am,' replied the stranger, an' before I knew what I was about, or could utter another word, I found myself hustled into

the carriage ; the female jumped in after me, an' we drove off at a rattling pace towards Oxford Street.

"When I recovered my breath, I demanded to know how they dared treat a respectable married female in this way, an' insisted on knowing where they were taking me.

"They might have been deaf for all the notice they took of me. 'Oh,' says I, 'you ain't a-going to kidnap a respectable female in this way. If you don't tell me this instant where you are taking me, I'll alarm the passers-by.'

"'You'd better not,' said the woman ; 'keep quiet or I'll make you.'

"'Hoity-toity!' exclaims I, my blood getting up at the way she spoke to me, 'I'll just show you what I'll do. How dare you keep me here against my will?' With that I gave a scream an' made a dash at the window. I just had time to call out murder once, at the pitch of my voice, when I found myself at the bottom of the carriage with a gag in my mouth an' my arms tied behind my back.

"That females were stronger in the arms than most men, I soon had occasion to know ; when they had drawn down the carriage blinds they lifted me up like an infant on the back seat, without even speaking to me.

"Well, I was nearly smothered with rage an' fright, let alone want of breath, so, as I couldn't speak nor move my arms, I began kicking with all my might.

"Bless you! before I knew how it came about, they had strapped my legs together in such a way I couldn't move them without feeling the most horrible pain.

"I don't know how I kept my senses after this. Here was I driven through the busiest streets of London, perhaps to a cruel death, without a soul knowing anything about it, an' I powerless to utter one cry for help ; if my own husband had been passing in the street he couldn't have helped me. An' what tortured me most was, I couldn't even appeal to these people for mercy, an' they never uttered one word during that fearful ride, which I shall never forget to my dying day, no, not if I live to be a hundred.

"Well, the carriage stopped at last ; we may have been driving for an hour, it seemed to me an age. The minute the carriage stopped the blinds were drawn up, an' I could see that we had pulled up before a large house of most respectable appearance.

I was more mystified than ever. It didn't look like a place they'd bring a stranger to for the purpose of robbery and murder.

"A man opened the carriage door. 'All right?' he asked, looking searchingly at me. 'Rather troublesome, eh? Well, no use making a noise here.'

"The woman took the gag from my mouth and unstrapped my legs; then got out and helped me to alight. Had my arms been free, I think I should have knocked her down for the treatment I had received at her hands.

"'Come along,' said she harshly, 'or you'll be made to,' when she saw that I didn't intend to go into the house.

"'Yes, better go in quietly,' said the man. 'The person that wants to see you is waiting for you inside.'

"Well, as there was four to one, counting the coachman, I thought I'd better go in and see the end of it.

"The door was wide open, so I followed the woman, who led the way, the man keeping close to my elbow.

"We went through a spacious hall, then through double doors into a passage, an' along that passage for some distance till we came to a door which the woman, who led the way, unlocked. This door led into a sort of ante-room or vestibule. We crossed this, then went through double doors again into a rather large room, very plainly furnished. The windows were open, and a beautiful green creeping plant trailed all over them, looking so cool an' fresh an' pleasant; but when I looked again I found, to my horror, that the windows were barred like a prison.

"The woman, who led the way all along, turned to me an' said rather pleasantly, 'You can sit down and make yourself comfortable till tea-time. Better take off your bonnet, and mantle too; you'll feel more at home.'

"'Now look here, ma'am,' says I, out of all patience with her cool airs, 'I'm tired of this game! The gentleman outside the door told me as how some one wanted to see me, so please don't keep me waiting, and I beg to inform you that I'm expected home to tea by my husband.'

"Would you believe me, the only answer she made was, 'Oh, all right,' an' set herself down as though I were a stock or a stone for all the notice she took of me.

The man left the room by a door opposite the one we had entered by, an' I was left alone with this aggravating person, who

never answered me one word, though I made myself hoarse with trying to make her understand that if she wanted anybody in particular she'd got hold of the wrong person. If my arms hadn't been tied behind my back she'd have felt the weight of my hand on that hard-featured phiz of hers afore we had been ten minutes in that room. As it was, all I could do was to use my tongue, but she took down a book from the shelf, an' began to read as coolly as if there wasn't another creature in the room. She didn't even look up at me, much less answer me.

"When I'd quite worn myself out with talking, the man came back.

"'Been troublesome?' he asked, addressing that aggravating person, but looking at me.

"'Rather,' answered she, with a yawn; 'says her name's Traddles, an' has a husband waiting tea for her at home.'

"'She'll announce herself as the Queen of England next, I shouldn't wonder,' said the man with a laugh. 'Will you come in to tea, Mrs. What-you-like-to-call-yourself?'

"'I never calls myself anything but my own lawful name, sir,' says I, drawing myself up and looking scornfully at him, 'and that's Trimbley; so please don't call me anything else, or there's them as may bring you up for libel.'

"'If you promise to behave yourself like a lady we'll untie your arms,' said the aggravating person. 'I don't wish the ladies to see you with your arms tied. They will think you are violent.'

"'Oh, better let her loose, she's not very wild. Come, make haste; tea's waiting,' said the man, beginning to untie my arms.

"Well, I went in to tea. There were about a dozen ladies seated at a long table, all nicely dressed, an' nothing very remarkable about them, except that they were all silent an' didn't take the least notice of me when I sat down.

"The bread an' butter an' cake didn't look much like company fare, an' the tea was weak enough, so this couldn't be a tea party. Who could the ladies be? an' where was I?

"'Can you tell me where I am, ma'am?' said I in a low tone to the lady beside me. To my astonishment she did not pay the slightest heed to my question, but went on sipping her tea, quite oblivious of everybody.

"I turned to the lady on the other side an' repeated my question. 'You mustn't talk at table; it's against rules,' she replied without looking at me.

"An elderly lady opposite me, with very large staring eyes, said in a voice that seemed to come from the soles of her boots, 'Your highness is in Chin Tartary. We are expecting the Emperor of Russia to dine with us to-morrow.'

"The truth dawned on my mind all in an instant—I was in a mad-house!

"They had taken me by some mistake for a mad patient whom they had been sent to fetch from the house in Dean Street.

"Only for that thought I should have fainted right away. As it was, I felt terribly cut up, not knowing what lengths that aggravating person might go to, under the impression that she had an insane person to deal with.

"When tea was over I was taken back to the room I first entered, but although I did my best to make that aggravating person who had charge of me understand the mistake she had made in taking me for an insane patient, she never once took the least notice of what I said, but got out some needlework an' went on sewing as though she were stone deaf.

"It was getting almost dark when a young gent. entered the room. He never said one word, but, coming up close to me, viewed me over quite leisurely like, as though I were some fancy dog he was taking the points of.

"'Well,' says I, at last getting quite impatient, 'I hopes you see I ain't no more mad than yourself, an' if you are the doctor here I'll thank you to have me taken at once to my home, where my husband is——'

"But before I'd done speaking he turned an inquiring look on that aggravating female, who at once broke in on my discourse.

"'Yes,' said she, with a nod of her head towards me, 'says she has a husband an' sons, an' is called Grimaldi.'

"'Oh, you false female!' cried I, out of all patience. 'I'd like to teach you to speak the truth, for——'

"'Stop!' said the gent., laying his hand on my shoulder. 'We don't allow anything of that sort here. We keep a gag for unruly tongues.'

"'So I've found already, but you'll have to pay for that same or my name's not Trimbley!'

"Oh, Trimble, is it?" he asked quite mockingly. "Well, try an' keep your tongue quiet and you'll get along quite comfortably with nurse here; she's kindness itself, is nurse."

"Then he turned his back on me, said a few words to the nurse that I couldn't hear, and left the room whistling a music-hall tune just like the comic man at a play.

"Soon after that, the nurse lit a candle an' told me to come to bed.

"But I soon let her know that wild horses wouldn't draw me to bed at that hour, an' me without my supper, too.

"Well, the end of it was that they brought me in some bread an' cheese an' stout, an' after I'd had my supper, fearing that aggravating person would use violence towards me unless I obeyed her, sore against my will I followed her upstairs to bed.

"You may be certain I didn't sleep much, though I must say the bed was most comfortable: linen sheets an' everything about the room that a lady could wish. The nurse had a bed in the same room, an' all through the night, if I only stirred my finger or lifted my head from the pillow, she instantly up and stared at me with wide-open eyes that made me feel creepy.

"Just after daybreak I fell asleep an' only woke up by the noise some one made on entering the room.

"What, your patient not awake yet?" said this person. "You'll let her sleep herself sane at this rate. What will Doctor Pounceford say to that?"

"Oh, says I to myself, I'll remember that name anyhow, but it won't be much profit Doctor Pounceford will get out of me, I'm thinking.

"I knew by this time that it was no use wasting words on the nurse, so I got up and dressed, ate my breakfast, then waited as patiently as I could to see what would turn up next.

"It was getting on towards ten o'clock when I observed the nurse putting everything in order as though she expected some one of importance.

"Well, I never heard any one enter that room, but all of a sudden, as I lifted my eyes from the carpet, I saw a pleasant-looking gentleman standing a few feet from me, an' the gent. I spoke with the night before close at his elbow.

"Where's our patient, nurse?" he asked, looking round the room.

"The nurse looked at him, then at me, her face beginning to turn quite yellow with fright.

"'What is this woman doing here?' said he. His face by this time was anything but pleasant to look at.

"'That woman, sir? that woman is the patient we brought from Dean Street—Mrs. Mathers, sir.'

"He made two or three steps towards her, his face quite distorted with rage.

"In my fright I began to scream; he looked as though about to murder her. 'Fool!' he exclaimed, shaking his fist at her, 'keep your tongue quiet.'

"Then turning to me in a rage, he cried: 'Stop that noise! Who are you? How dare you palm yourself off for some one else!'

"'I palm myself off for some one else!' says I. 'It ain't likely I'd want to leave my husband's home to come to Doctor Pounceford's mad-house.'

"'You've been very communicative, I find,' said he, looking at the nurse with a dark frown.

"The nurse protested with white lips that she had never once mentioned his name in my presence.

"'An' who are you, my good woman? Will you oblige me with your name?' said he, turning on me an' looking as though he'd like to annihilate me on the spot.

"'She calls herself Dimpley, I think,' replied the young gent., his eye twinkling as though longing to laugh outright at the doctor's discomfiture.

"'No, young man, I never called myself by that or any other name but my own lawful one, so you'd better take care or I'll bring you up for libel!' cried I, looking quite scornfully at the whole of them.

"'But what is your name?' asked the doctor. 'Why hadn't you told this person your name yesterday?'

"'Ask her if I didn't, more than twenty times. I begged her to let me go home last night, until I was hoarse with asking, but she treated me as though I was a dog barking at her. However, I've told that person, likewise that gent. there, already, that my name is Trimbley. My husband is to be found any day in the porter's lodge at the Temple. Any one will tell you that a honester man than David Trimbley never stepped in shoe leather;

so now that I've been an' told all of you who I am, don't go on pretending that you don't know my name, or I'll have the law on you, sure as I am a respectable married woman.'

"After that the doctor became quite civil, saying that he was sorry that his people made a mistake an' put me to so much inconvenience, an' that I was quite free to go as soon as ever I liked.

"But I soon gave him to understand that I wasn't to be dragged from my home an' gagged an' bound like a common felon for nothing.

"Then he took me into his study and wanted me to take a glass of wine an' some cake, but I shook my head at him, just to let him know I was up to his tricks; he'd like to have drugged me an' then have me dropped at some street corner, to be took up as drunk an' incapable.

"However, thank mercy, I got away from the house at last! The young gent, who is Doctor Pounceford's assistant, brought me home in a closed carriage an' let me out at Temple Bar. Nevertheless, as I told him an' Doctor Pounceford, I'd have the law on everybody concerned in dragging me to a mad-house an' detaining me there against my will all night."

"Poor Alice! she and her child had a narrow escape yesterday," said the old clerk. "Do you know that some one was in the act of carrying off Freda when Alice arrived at the house in Dean Street?"

Mrs. Trimble uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and David, who had listened in gloomy silence to his wife's long narrative, looked up with some faint show of interest.

"But where is Alice? Where is my darling Freda? Are they safe now?" cried Mrs. Trimble, starting up as though she meant to go in quest of them immediately.

At this moment the office door opened and Alice appeared leading Freda by the hand.

In another instant Freda was clasped in Mrs. Trimble's motherly arms.

"Won't dad kiss me too?" asked the child, looking timidly towards him.

Trimble stretched out his arms towards her and burst into tears.

It was a touching sight to see that fair, gentle child clasp her

arms around that uncouth man's neck and rest her head on his broad shoulder, like a dove finding rest. She had learnt to love honest David Trimby as her father, and had missed his thoughtful tenderness sorely since she had lived alone, in that dreary lodging, with her mother, whose life had been too soured and embittered to make her a lovable companion to the gentle, sensitive child.

Alice, who as yet was quite unaware of Mrs. Trimby's strange adventures in her stead, drew herself up with that Nemesis-like air of hers, and looked darkly at her old friends.

"I told you, David Trimby, that you should never see me or my child again until you would be proud to own our acquaintance. We can face the world without a blush now. We are no longer under a ban."

"Hush, Alice, not another word of reproach," interposed the old clerk quickly. "Mrs. Trimby is your true friend; she saved you yesterday from a terrible fate."

Explanations quickly followed. Alice very soon found herself embracing her kind-hearted old friend and weeping on her shoulder, she scarcely knew why.

(To be concluded.)

Reminiscences of a Short Visit to Japan.

HOW WE GOT THERE AND HOME AGAIN.

PART IV.

OF the many steamers I have been on, none seemed to me more comfortable or better appointed than the Japan mail ship, by which we left Shanghai for the land of the "Rising Sun." The captain and officers were American or British, the crew entirely Japanese, part of the stewards the same, while a part with the stewardess were Chinese. The latter was a great eccentricity and her funny "pidjin" English often made me laugh; I wondered how, when the ship rolled, she could ever keep on her extraordinary feet of about three inches long! I was told that these "Amahs," as they are called, make the most excellent nurses to children, who become devoted to them. It would be a good thing if British stewards would take example in cleanliness from these Orientals; literally on these vessels not a speck of dirt or dust is to be seen anywhere, either above or below. The food, too, was very superior to the fare you usually meet with at sea. Among the first-class passengers were several Japanese men and women, both of whom were attired in their national dress. The former seemed quite at home at meals, but the latter looked terribly shy and frightened, as if they were very uncomfortable sitting on chairs, instead of on the floor, and as if they longed for their chop-sticks in the place of the forks and spoons. We longed to talk to them and set them at their ease, but as they knew no English it was impossible.

Nagasaki was the first port we touched at. It is a truly lovely spot: the bay is so shut in by the many green islands far and near, it has almost the appearance of a lake. The little town lies at the foot of some prettily wooded hills and looks very gay owing to the flags flying from each of the many consulates; when we arrived a portion of the British Fleet lay at anchor, with their colours also fluttering in the breeze. I had heard so much of the charms of Japan that I feared I should be disappointed, but, on the

contrary, from the first I was greatly impressed, which impression only deepened as I saw more of both the people and the country. Going on shore we made a pleasant expedition in "rickshaws" to Mogi, a pretty little sea-side place, where we had luncheon in a tea-house and were waited on by two nice little Jap maids.

The next day we steamed all through the beautiful inland sea, when I was much struck with the extreme softness and delicacy of colouring in the landscape everywhere. On landing at Kobe we were greeted with the sad intelligence of the attempt on the life of the Czarewitch* by a rickshaw boy at Otsu, his cousin, Prince George of Greece, who was with him, having saved him with the help of another rickshaw boy, but unfortunately not before he had been wounded. In consequence H. I. H. abandoned the remainder of his travels and the next day he arrived from Kioto, where he had been staying at the palace, and left for Russia. We watched his arrival at Kobe accompanied by the Mikado and by a large troop of cavalry, while infantry lined the streets, which were gaily decorated with flags and flowers; amidst the firing of guns he embarked on board of one of the ships belonging to the small Russian fleet, which lay off shore awaiting him, and the next morning the whole of this fleet sailed to return home. There were many reports afloat as to the cause of this assassination, one being merely that the man was one of the old-fashioned fanatics, with the rooted prejudice against the foreigner, and that others holding his opinions had urged him to this evil deed, because they were indignant at the large sums of money which were being spent on the reception of a strange prince. Other rumours were that the culprit was but the instrument of Nihilists, for there are a large number of Russians settled in Japan, and among them some who are supposed to belong to that body, who had seized this opportunity to carry out their wicked designs. Whatever it was, both the people generally and the government were horrified at such a crime being attempted, especially on one who was at the time their guest: the criminal was sentenced to penal servitude for life, while the governor, the chief constable and the high priest at Otsu were all dismissed from the Imperial service. Afterwards we heard that the Czar† had sent a present of fifty

* Now the Czar Nicholas II.

† The late Czar Alexander III.

yen (dollars) to be given annually for life to the rickshaw boy who had helped Prince George of Greece to seize and arrest the would-be murderer.

The scenery round Kobe is extremely pretty, and the harbour very fine. One day we went over by train to Osaka, where there is a splendid fort with fine battlements; an officer quartered there, who though he did not know English could speak a little French, very civilly showed us about. We were all much taken with the cleanliness of the place, such a contrast to China. The streets, the barracks and the tea-house, where we had luncheon, were all scrupulously clean and so were the people; they were so civil, too, and had such bright happy faces. The Japanese soldiers are very smart in appearance, their uniforms, which resemble European ones, are so well kept. Although small they are sturdy little men. It is not surprising that these well-drilled and well-equipped soldiers have so easily defeated the Chinese in the late war in Corea, considering that the latter in appearance are more like a horde of ragged beggars than anything else. On this occasion we had our first experience of a "Nippon Chow," or Japanese meal. Taking off our shoes at the entrance of the tea-house, we walked in our stockings on the clean matting to the dining-room, where, seated on the floor, we were waited on by little maids, who served to us, on small lacquer trays, basins in which our food was prepared. We fed ourselves with chop-sticks, which at first I found very difficult, but after a while I managed them tolerably well; anyway, our guide expressed himself surprised at our dexterity. We also drank "saki," the one wine of the country, which you drink from tiny open dishes, so that it would not suit a thirsty Englishman, for you get but a mouthful at a time. Having been told of a wonderful fan shop at Osaka, I determined to try and find it, so I left the rest of our party and our guide and trusted myself to discover it alone with the help of my rickshaw boy, who did not understand English. After some trouble I succeeded and by signs I contrived to make my bargains, carrying off a capital and varied collection, but suddenly I found there was barely time to catch my train. I managed to make my "boy" understand this; he simply flew like the wind through the streets and brought me to the station just in time. I hurriedly gave him double fare, for he deserved it, and then rushed to the carriage, where I saw my friends eagerly

making signs to me to join them. Just as we were moving, to my great astonishment my "boy" appeared at the window and thrust in the change from his fare, which I was unable to return, for the train was off. I could not help thinking you would not often meet with such honesty.

A short railway journey from Kobe brought us to Kioto, the ancient capital, which is enchanting, it is so entirely Japanese, and has no European quarter at all. On the way it was most interesting watching the peasants labouring in the rice fields, which are all flooded by irrigation, the seeds being sown in the water. They are so industrious that, combined with a fertile soil, sometimes three crops are grown in the year and always two. Our hotel stood high on the outskirts of the town in a lovely garden, with wooded slopes beyond, and from the balcony of my room I had a splendid panorama view for miles and miles of the country round.

The hotel proprietor and all his establishment were Japanese. Certainly no people know better than they do how to serve you well and make you comfortable. The cooking was excellent, and the cleanliness everywhere quite unique. I noticed here, as well as in all the Japanese hotels, houses, or tea-houses, the exquisite taste in the arrangement of the flower vases. I had often heard this was so, and realized fully when travelling in the land how true and how universal it was, for even in the most out of the way parts of the country you found the same; in fact, this art is considered necessary in a girl's education, therefore they are all taught when quite young. The scenes in the streets were frequently very picturesque. Numbers of little children in their gay attire were to be seen playing in front of the neat houses, all so good-humoured, apparently never quarrelling, with such happy faces; pretty girls in scarlet or sky-blue kimonos, as their sort of dressing-gowns are called, with bright-coloured obis (sashes), their hair elaborately done in the shape of a butterfly, with a flower daintily stuck in it, their faces enamelled, and their cheeks and lips rouged, fans or parasols in their hands, would be walking about, or, I should rather say, "waddling," which the pattens they wear cause; these they remove on entering the house, and go about in their white cotton stockings, which always have a partition for the big toe. Sometimes they would be followed by one of the small native black and white pug dogs. The

married women wear quieter colours. Now and then they have a baby strapped on their backs. Usually their teeth are blacked, making the very ugly effect in their mouths of a row of boot-buttons, as formerly it was the custom for the teeth to be dyed on the marriage day. Now a law has been passed to stop this. In consequence, fortunately, the younger women have not this defect. The old women would occasionally appear in the national hood worn by all in winter.

The shops in this city were most attractive; in many of them the owners had workrooms at the back, where we could see the men making gold lacquer in its manifold stages, red lacquer and the common lacquer, also cloisonné, or shippo, as it is termed in Japan; bronzes, embroidery, wood-carving, ivory-carving, painting on china or silk, in fact every conceivable artistic work. Some of the pottery, too, was very fine both in form and quality, especially Seifu's, who is considered the leading potter of the day. I was fortunate enough to obtain two beautiful pieces direct from his studio. In England we do not see their finest work, as they will not send their best to the ordinary market, because they are too artistic to hurry it, although extremely industrious. The detail is so elaborate, each part must have equal time and skill devoted to it. Thus, even with some of their smaller products, a year or occasionally two or three years will pass before the object in hand is completed to the maker's satisfaction. I heard that the manufacture of gold lacquer is so costly that the emperor gives annually a sum to keep it up, for fear of the art being lost, owing to so few being able to purchase it, for it is little appreciated out of Japan, except by connoisseurs; the quantity of gold in it, with the amount of careful and skilful labour it needs, being the reason of its costliness. Lacquer is made from the sap of the tseih-shoo, but the actual process of making it is still kept a dead secret among the Japanese. The resinous sap or juice of the tseih-shoo shrub is poisonous in its liquid state, and requires the greatest caution in using, for whatever it touches it stains. It is taken when the shrubs are seven or eight years old. Incisions are made into the bark and a shell is fixed to catch the sap, which flows into it during the night. I believe this continues to be done throughout the summer until the juice ceases to flow.

On entering a shop, if the shopkeepers think you mean to buy,

they bring you tea served in tiny cups without handles, after making you the usual reverence of the country, which is to bow the head very low, hitching up the shoulders while you do so and hissing all the time with your lips. If great respect is intended the hiss is made louder and the shoulders are hitched up higher. The shops are all very clean and covered with matting, which is kept in the most perfect order.

We made many charming expeditions from Kioto, among them to Otsu, where the murder of the poor Czarewitch* had been attempted, because we wished to visit some historical temples there; also Lake Biwar, which is near and in the midst of some fine scenery. Another day we made a long excursion by rickshaws, each of us having three "boys," two to pull in the shafts, like in a tandem, and one to push at the back. Thus they kept up their speed to quite six miles an hour or more, returning by river, where we shot some rapids, the beautiful wooded banks on each side being ablaze with wild red and pink azaleas. I shall not, though, relate fully concerning all the temples we visited, or the expeditions that we made, which always took us through the most exquisite landscape, as this would only weary the reader, but shall rather reserve for this brief narrative simply the principal places and buildings we saw.

Unfortunately as the Mikado was residing for a while in Kioto, we could not see his palace, as it is closed while he is in residence. This we regretted, as we had a desire to see the artistic work of the interior.

Before leaving we had a very amusing entertainment one evening of another "Nippon Chow," or Japanese dinner at a tea-house, this time on a grander scale. I really began to feel almost at home with chop-sticks. As soon as dinner was over some pretty geisha girls came and danced before us, or I might more correctly say, postured before us most gracefully. They were most becomingly dressed, their little ways and manners being truly bewitching; one played the "samisen," another the "coto," while the rest were singing and posturing. The first of these instruments is something between a guitar and a mandoline, while the "coto" rather resembles a zither on a huge scale, but is placed on the ground and played with the fingers. They seemed much pleased at our praise of their performances. They

* The present Czar Nicholas II.

asked leave to examine the clothes and the jewellery of the other ladies and myself, and were much interested when we explained to them about our little ornaments. Two of them presented me with their visiting cards, which were most diminutive. Each card had a pretty little view painted on it, and the name printed in tiny Japanese letters in the corner.

With great regret we left Kioto, returning by rail to Kobe, and from there proceeding by sea to Yokohama, by another of the Japan mail ships, which was even superior to the first; in fact my cabin was so large in this one, I was able to have all my baggage in it, instead of sending down the bulk into the hold.

At Yokohama I had my first view of Fujiyama, which means "first mountain;" it is 13,000 feet in height. In the eyes of all Japanese it is a sacred mountain and superior in their minds to any other mountain in the world, and that is why they are so fond of introducing it into their paintings, in fact into almost everything they make on which a mountain can be formed. It was most striking as I saw it that day, when with a sky of the most delicate blue overhead, its snow-topped cone rose in the particular way it is apt to do, out of the soft grey clouds, that hid all its centre, which is the way it is so often represented in pictures; its white top sparkling in the brilliant Eastern sun, causing such a wonderful effect, that I felt I could well understand the good people of the "Land of the Rising Sun" thinking their special mountain quite "ichiban" or "a one," which is a favourite expression with them for the superlative.

We were most fortunate in securing one of the best of the guides, whose name was Jetzusa Yoshida. I had heard it said that he was supposed to be the most honest of all the guides; he certainly appeared in all money transactions to bear out this character. He was most obliging, taking endless trouble for us even beyond his natural duties and in the most amiable way; he was always good-humoured and smiling; I never once saw him put out. He lived at Yokohama, so while we were staying there, he brought his wife and his little son of three years old to see us. She was such a nice woman and so good-looking; having only been married within the last few years, she was fortunately not disfigured by the blackened teeth alluded to before, which gives such an unsightly appearance to the face and the effect as if the

mouth could not close. They seemed much attached to each other and were both very proud of their little boy, who was an extremely merry, intelligent little fellow. Yoshida's wife was accompanied by a very pretty niece, who was charmingly dressed in a most becoming national costume with a beautiful silk obi round the waist; the aunt initiated me into several of their ways of tying this sash.

I bought several costumes for children; for one I took the measure of a Jap child of fourteen; on my return home I found it just fitted an English child of eight, so diminutive are they in comparison to us.

Some of the shops at Yokohama were very tempting, especially those with stuffs, porcelain and sketches of the country on cardboard, which were painted in the most delicate and finished style. It is well situated, with a good harbour and views of distant mountains in the background, but it is too europeanized to please me as much as the towns already mentioned. Of course it has a race-course and a golf ground, for, as I have stated before, wherever John Bull settles he also establishes these two British sports. Quite a large British colony is living there; in consequence, combined with the numbers of Americans, besides a few Australians, the English-speaking races are by far the most numerous among the foreign residents throughout Japan; therefore at the railway stations all instructions are written up in English—but in that tongue only—as well as in Japanese, and now our language is being taught in all the public schools.

The country round is very pretty, with many interesting antiquities to be found. Among these there is a colossal bronze statue of Buddha, or "Daibutzu" as it is called, which means "Great Buddha;" this famous image stands in the gardens of an ancient temple near to Hasemura, which is less than half a "ri" from Kamakura. "Daibutzu" was cast in 1252 by Goroyemon, under the orders of Yoritomo; it was formerly under the roof of the Temple of Shojo Senji, but the latter no longer exists, having been destroyed, it is said, by a tidal wave in 1494. Nothing now remains but the foundation stones.

Japan is celebrated for two such colossal images. The largest is at Nara, near Kioto. It is said that a full-grown man may

crawl through his nostrils into the head. Its dimensions and those of the one at Kamakura are given below.

Nara.		Kamakura.	
Height ...	53 feet 6 in.	Height ...	50 feet 0 in.
Length of face ...	16 " 0 "	Length of face ...	12 " 0 "
" of ear ...	8 " 6 "	" of ear ...	6 " 6 "
Width of nostrils	3 " 0 "	Width of nostrils	2 " 3 "
" of mouth	3 " 8 "	" of mouth	3 " 3 "

According to the Japanese the two figures are composed of copper, tin and a little gold. They are hollow, and the one at Kamakura is decorated inside after the manner of a temple ; it weighs about 450 tons.

Our next move was to Myanoshita, a most charming spot in the mountains, 1,100 feet above the sea, close to some hot-springs, which supplied the comfortable "Fujiya Hotel" with the most enjoyable baths I have ever been in. The water, which was naturally warm, flowed straight from the springs through the baths, so that the whole time you were in them, fresh water was coming over you and passing out at the other end. The hotel was entirely built of wood, partly arranged according to Japanese custom ; it was thoroughly clean throughout, as were the charming little maids too, who waited on us in their native dress. They were always smiling and full of fun, so eager to do all they could to please, talking a peculiar sort of "pidjin" English ; the one who attended to me said : "Me bring rady one piecey more bigger hot water" (I will bring lady one more jug of hot water). They cannot pronounce the letter L ; even Yoshida, who spoke fairly well, failed ever to pronounce an L.

Of all the expeditions we made, I thought the scenery of those from Myanoshita excelled all others, especially to Lake Hakone, from which we had the most complete view of Fujiyama we ever had, from its base to its snow-crowned summit glistening in the sun, the shores of the lake being covered with pink azaleas, forming a striking contrast to the dark green of the stately pines, in the ancient Temple gardens, which extended for some way along the water-side. On our road there, we passed through endless woods clothed in the tender verdure of spring, with here and there clusters of wisteria or plants of red azaleas. Each time we emerged into the open, ranges of prettily-shaped hills met our gaze, while birds sang too engagingly above us ; one had, I

think, the sweetest note I have ever heard. I felt sorry that I failed to find out its name, for its note was not familiar to me. We also passed some sulphur springs, at which there was an establishment of native baths, where both sexes bathe together. Every few miles, in all our excursions all over the country, we came upon charming tea-houses, from which the landlady or her daughter would at once run out to offer tea from the tiny cup. I quite grew to like this beverage and often found it refreshing after a long walk; it tasted more like the green tea we drink in England; it is of course drunk by itself without sugar or milk.

I was much taken with the native craft in all the villages, such pretty wood carvings, from neat, well-finished cabinets to the smallest boxes or toys, usually with some handy dodge about them quite unique and unlike anything in any other country.

On our way to Tokio we had to return and take the train at Yokohama, so I seized the opportunity of telegraphing from there about noon on June 6th my congratulations to a friend who was to be married in London on June 3rd. So well had I calculated that the telegram was received on the latter date about 4 p.m., just after the wedding had taken place; it seemed curious that, wiring on the 6th, it should arrive the 3rd.

If possible, Tokio interested me the most of all these wonderful places. It is vast, in fact, the streets seem never to end, and the innumerable low houses in neat rows continue as far as the eye can carry. Our hotel was in the suburbs, and from my window I had a splendid view, with the river in the foreground, full of the pretty lotus flower in full bloom. We drove all round the capital to get every view of it and from all parts. I felt equally impressed as we drove past the Mikado's palace. I longed to see the interior, which I had heard was very beautifully decorated with all the best artistic work of the country. We had contemplated arranging to be presented at court, as this would have given us an opportunity of seeing the palace, but owing to being pressed for time we were unable to do so. However, the glorious Temples of Shiba, which are close to Tokio, are decorated with as fine artistic work as can be seen; one feared even in one's stockings lest one should scratch the exquisite lacquer floors. They stand in a grove of magnificent cedars, with stately avenues of these grand trees leading up to them, besides the usual rows of stone pedestals and their lantern tops, which every temple has, the

thick branches of the cedars producing a dim religious light within and around the buildings, as if to mark the hallowed spot in contrast to the dazzling brightness one experienced on emerging from the grove on a hot summer's day.

At the British Legation I made the acquaintance of some Japanese, all of whom I found charming, the Emperor's chamberlain being a particularly agreeable man. He conversed a good deal on the distress of all his country at the recent attempt on the life of the Czarewitch. He it was who gave me the information before referred to, that the Mikado gave a large sum annually for the keeping up of the gold lacquer work in Japan. I also learnt from him that the people are so naturally artistic that in the prisons two-thirds of the inmates are employed in artistic work and only one-third in manual labour, as the former work brings in so much more money to the state owing to its greater value. He, like all those attached to the court, was in European dress, the imperial command having been given some time ago for it to be adopted at court by both sexes. The Empress brought her influence to bear much in regard to this, and with reason too ; for although one regrets the doffing of the picturesque "Kimono," which to the women especially is so far more becoming, I was told that it was really not warm enough for winter, and, in consequence, the women constantly get consumption or some illness from not being sufficiently clothed. In addition to this, as long as they stick to their national dress they are treated in the usual Oriental fashion, almost like slaves, and have to wait on their husbands, whereas, once a lady dresses in petticoats, she precedes her husband on entering the room and he waits on her in accordance with our more chivalric ideas.

I visited a school under the patronage of the Empress, and which, I believe, she originated for the education of the daughters of the *Daimios* (nobles) and of all the upper classes, as she is very anxious for the better education of the women, which has hitherto been much neglected. She makes a personal visit to the school annually and gives away the prizes. It comprises 320 pupils ; half of them wore the national costume and half of them European ; certainly the former looked most at their ease. The teachers, who were all Japanese women, except one English woman, also wore European clothes, including the head, who was a man. German, French and English are taught, but only a few learn the first two

languages, while each girl learns English. I asked one who was being taught French which she preferred ; she eagerly replied English. We found one girl learning the piano, but they do not make much way with music generally, except with their own, which it is the custom for the blind to teach, and a blind man was instructing a girl in the art of playing the coto, a string instrument which stands on the floor and has rather a mournful but soft, pretty tone.

The blind are also employed as shampooers (rubbers) owing to their touch being so light. To let people know they are near and can be had, if required, they play a pretty sort of whistle, almost like a flute, outside the houses, which makes a sort of plaintive half-weird and half-melodious sound, and is rather attractive. By slow degrees the Japs are taking up music a little, for at Yokohama there was a very creditable brass band, in which the performers were all natives.

The class which interested me most at the girls' school was the painting ; the pupils were all sitting on benches, painting on desks in front of them, and not, according to the habit of their country, on the ground. They were all wonderfully talented, and the rapidity with which one child of fourteen painted a cluster of flowers from nature, without drawing them first, astonished me. The copies some of the older girls had made of English drawings, especially of some of Herring's Highland cattle, were most remarkable ; for one must bear in mind, both the landscape and animals are quite unfamiliar to their eyes, being totally different from anything in Japan. Art, though, is so innate in them, they have the power, after very little study, to follow and appreciate it in a perfectly different line to their own.

Mr. de Bunsen, the chief secretary of the British Legation (now minister at Siam), who had just arrived from Washington, was most kind in entertaining us and in escorting us to see all he thought might interest us. He introduced us to the principal of the School of Art at Tokio, who was most courteous and took infinite pains to show us over, informing me that he considered, although his countrymen had benefited artistically, especially in figure painting and perspective, by their intercourse with European artists, he must say, on their behalf, that he felt the latter had also benefited by their intercourse with Japanese artists in the depicting of nature and scenery. He explained to me that the

reason the Japs generally paint sitting on their heels, with their object lying flat on the ground before them, is, that they so often paint on silk, and in this position the colour does not run. We saw here artists of all kinds, some making gold lacquer, some carving both wood and ivory, and some making cloisonné. A special new sort of this choice ware was being exhibited, in which you could not discover the gold outline in the tracery of the design, the enamel being so completely laid over it as to hide it. But for my own taste I preferred the ancient style, in which the perfect lines of the design can be traced throughout, for in really good cloisonné there is great beauty in the form of the outline. We were also shown the porcelain of all dates, some of the modern being quite exquisite as well as the ancient; among the latter were the finest specimens of "satsuma" in existence. The principal told me that the South Kensington Museum, in London, possessed some of the best Japanese art work, especially the best lacquer. On bidding us good-bye he kindly invited us to a tea ceremony, which, with great regret, we had to decline, as we were leaving.

Being anxious to see all I could of the artistic talent of the land, I inspected some of the private studios, where I was much interested in watching the artists at work and much struck with their great diligence. From one I purchased some really beautifully painted "Kakemonos," procuring them thus direct from the studio. I obtained some really superior articles, very different to those picked up in the shops.

The iris garden near Tokio was in full bloom and was one of the prettiest of sights; the flowers were growing in irregular heights in masses and were of all shades of blue mingled with white. The wisteria, too, which covered one of the tea-houses in the neighbourhood, was truly a spectacle; the quantities of mauve blossom were so thick that not a leaf nor a twig of the shrub could be seen. Undoubtedly one of the great attractions of the plants in Japan is the wealth and the richness of the blossom, which seems to grow there in greater magnitude than anywhere else that I have seen.

The line of railway between Tokio and Nikko was very striking; for twenty-five miles it passed through the famous avenue of creptomerias, which magnificent trees are about 200 feet in height and stretch over a length of nearly forty

miles, ending up steep inclines in the approach to the celebrated Temples of Nikko, which are by far the finest of all the many beautiful temples in Japan, standing as they do in most extensive and well-kept grounds. There are fifteen, besides a five-storied pagoda, all of them being dedicated to Buddha. The wondrous beauty of the carving, the designs, the colouring, and the form both within and without are far beyond my powers of description. Each time I entered them and crept softly about in my stockings on the delicate gold-lacquer floors, I seemed to find some fresh gem or work of art to admire; I could sit for hours gazing up at the glorious enamel work in the ceilings alone, where each minutest detail was perfect. The old priests in charge looked very picturesque in their dress of yellow drapery, their heads and faces shaved and their bare feet in sandals. They were very friendly and civil to us, especially so on seeing how truly we appreciated and admired these marvellous temples. Pilgrims were constantly coming to and fro from all parts of the empire to worship there. We unluckily just missed the great festival of the year, at which the procession must be a wonderful sight, if the panorama picture of it given us by our hotelkeeper is correct.

The red lacquer bridge across the river is a great feature at Nikko. The legend attached to it is, that a Shogun (ancient noble) who was pursuing his enemy was stopped by the floods, making the river impassable; he therefore prayed to Buddha to help him, and then determined to rest the night by the water-side. At daybreak he awoke to find this beautiful red lacquer bridge constructed, by which he was enabled to pass over.

We made many enjoyable picnics in the neighbourhood, which is all richly wooded, chiefly with maple trees; I heard that in the autumn their tints are quite lovely. The hills all round, many of which were 9,000 feet in height, were entirely wooded.

I must confess the day we left Nikko I felt a great lump in my throat as I was being conveyed swiftly to the station in a rickshaw. On alighting I said "Sayonara" (good-bye) to the "boy" who had drawn me; he quickly made me the deepest bow, hitching his shoulders very high and hissing loudly with his mouth, to show the greatest respect, and then said: "Sayonara, rady, and please come again." I felt much touched at his bringing out so appropriately the few words of English he

knew, but like all his nation he could not pronounce an L, but used an R in its place. We had but a few days at Yokohama after this, which were spent in collecting together our many purchases and getting them packed, before sailing in one of the fine Pacific mail ships for San Francisco.

Our guide and several other Japanese friends came to see us off, and very sad were the partings. I strained my eyes, glasses in hand, till the very last vestige of land could be seen. I felt really grieved that our pleasant stay in Japan was at an end; the recollection of it with all its charms must ever live in my memory.

The Pacific is certainly an unpleasant sea. Although I am a good sailor and kept perfectly well, I found this voyage both trying and monotonous; we never passed another ship the whole time, nor did we see a bird or any living thing. As we took a northerly course, it was very cold, which I felt all the more after the hot climates I had been in; fortunately we had several old friends among our fellow-passengers, who helped this fortnight to pass more quickly than it otherwise would. We had hoped to arrange to go by a steamer touching at Honolulu, and thus get a peep at the Sandwich Islands, but finding this would delay us a good deal, we abandoned the project.

After a voyage of thirteen days we landed at San Francisco, but had only time to sleep there one night, which we regretted, for we should have preferred to have extended our tour in California, much wishing to see more of that beautiful country, but being obliged to arrive in London by a certain date, our journey through America had to be very rapid.

The scenery from the railway between San Francisco and Portland was very fine, the whole train at one place being conveyed across the river in a pontoon. I could hardly believe that Portland had only existed for the last forty years, it seemed so large and so prosperous; it is well situated, standing high, surrounded by mountains, the principal streets being laid out in boulevards. The women of the better classes were all most becomingly attired in Paris toilettes and were extremely good-looking.

On leaving this city we steamed through large forests with views of the Cascade Mountains in the distance, the train again crossing a river on a pontoon. At Tacoma we took a coasting

steamer as far as Whatcome. The scenery here recalled to me more the inland sea of Japan than anything else, only it was finer owing to a background of two magnificent ranges of snow mountains. Whatcome is quite a new settlement, but is already very prosperous. We were glad to rest at one of its hotels, which we found clean though primitive, before proceeding by train to the Junction, which connects with the main line of the Canadian and Pacific Railway. We had much wished to go to Vancouver, but from lack of time it was impossible; however, I was assured that the scenery we had passed through was much the same as it is there and around Victoria.

Our first stoppage after this was at Glacier House, where we found an excellent dinner awaiting us, each table in the restaurant being beautifully decorated with wild flowers, in quite a different way to the Japanese, yet quite as picturesque and effective. A glorious golden and rosy sunset was reflected all over the finest glacier in the world, which rises up just behind the station. It was followed by a brilliant moon, which lit up the magnificent landscape through which we now travelled in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, passing by rushing torrents of a milky blue, caused by the melted snow; by rapids, cascades and lakes, with ranges of glaciers and snow-covered mountains, until we reached Banff. At this beautiful spot we rested for a few days in a most luxurious hotel. I felt I did not wonder at the Canadians being proud of this railway, for it is undoubtedly one of the greatest engineering feats of the age.

When we left Banff the train was four hours late. I therefore said to the darkie guard, I supposed we should make up for lost time. He replied, "Yes, make it up in two days; we shall arrive at Toronto at the right time." This sounded strange to my British ears, accustomed to our short journeys, to hear of a train making up time in two days instead of in two hours. These darkie guards sometimes amused me very much. I always found them civil and obliging, though somewhat cool in their ways. As usual, the mosquitoes, which always found me out everywhere, tormented me in the train and prevented me from sleeping at night. So one evening I put on some eucalyptus oil to keep them off; the guard asked me what it was. I explained. He answered, "Better mosquitoes than that bad smell!"

The prairie land seemed excessively tame after the Rockies.

The Red Indians we saw at the stations, with painted faces and clothed in skins and feathers, alone broke the monotony. We found a fairly good hotel at Winnipeg, and were very glad to get a night's rest there before proceeding to Fort Arthur, where we embarked on board of one of the steamers on Lake Superior. This voyage of two days and two nights was very unpleasant, especially as on this vast lake, where you completely lost sight of land, it was extremely cold and rough. Nearly all my poor fellow-passengers, particularly the women, succumbed and had to disappear. I was thankful myself, though more fortunate than they were, when we reached the calmer waters of Lake Huron, with its pretty shores. It was rather curious at Soult Ste. Marie, where the three lakes meet, Superior, Michigan and Huron, to see our great steamer sink in the lock, until on a level with the latter lake and with the lower part of the rapids which fall there; and afterwards see her glide away across the lower water. In a few hours we landed, and after a short journey in the train we reached Toronto.

The next morning we drove all round this town, which possesses some good buildings and a university; in the afternoon we crossed beautiful Lake Ontario by steamer, and in about three hours time we arrived at Niagara. My first sight of these splendid falls was by moonlight; never can I forget the impression they made on me, glittering under the silvery rays of the moon. Early and eagerly the next morning I returned to view them by daylight, when the glorious colour of the water, a sort of eau-de-nil blue, struck me much, besides the marvellous width of the falls, the spray dashing up twice the height of both sets of them, owing to their tremendous force. The rapids of Lake Erie are like a great tumultuous ocean in an angry storm. I could sit for hours watching them alone, in fact, I think I could never tire of gazing at any part of these wondrous waters. What too is most remarkable is, that immediately after this grand torrent the water becomes quite calm and flows away in a graceful river into Lake Ontario.

We spent several days at Niagara, and thoroughly enjoyed the rest at such a refreshing place after all our fatigues. A night's journey in a most luxurious train brought us to New York, where, after a short rest and breakfast, I hastened to see all I could of that great city before embarking in the

evening by one of the White Star Line, "homeward bound." This, I must confess, had a genial sound, much as I had enjoyed our ten months of travel all round and nearly all over the world.

It was a glorious moonlight night, and I sat up very late watching the shipping in the fine harbour. Notwithstanding, I rose at break of dawn the following day to get the last view before sailing out of the Bay of New York, the great beauty of which I had always heard of, but it even surpassed my expectation. As the summer haze of the early morning lifted, fresh objects appeared in sight, from the main land, the islands, the shipping of all kinds, to the great statue of Liberty rising straight out of the sea, the whole effect being indeed magnificent.

We had a most enjoyable voyage, lying on deck in cottons, until we steamed into British waters, when it became excessively rough, cold and showery: chairs were blown over, the decks were dripping, and we had all the usual discomforts of "dirty weather;" many unfortunate passengers disappeared until we reached land. It was so hazy, too, that the fog-horn, which has a maddening sound, was going night and day. At last we lay off Queenstown, stopping for ten minutes to give off and pick up mails, and as the tender approached for the latter, the hearty British cheer which met my ears made me realize the joyful moment had come and that we were once more home again.

L. A. L.

THE END.

"Just Waiting."

"THERE'S a long sweep of hills at the back of the house and the room I mean Hilda to have looks right across to them, and if it weren't for the different trees and the heat, she might fancy that she had never left old England."

I put down the letter I was reading for the tenth time. It was from my son in Africa, and contained, as most of his letters now did, little else than his plans or hopes for the comfort of Hilda Cheltnam, the girl he was going to marry as soon as he could afford to come over to fetch her and keep her properly out there. He had been away some time, many would have thought too long to trust to the constancy of a girl as pretty and as much given to flirting as Hilda ; but then I could not imagine for one moment that any one whom my boy loved could seriously entertain thoughts of another man, that is if they had the use of their eyes. He and Hilda had grown up together, and I shall always believe that it was on her account that he went abroad to get money more quickly, for I quite remember the look on his face when she said one day before they were engaged :

"Of all silly things, long engagements are the worst, and nothing makes a girl so old and wizened as waiting."

She had already waited two years, but the quiet village in which we lived had not seen much of her during that time, for she was constantly away in London, staying with a married sister, and now George would be home in a few months, so it would be all right, and even if I were left alone in my old age, the certainty of his happiness with her would be peace for me, and that is all old people ought to expect when they have outlived the one who was most dear.

My boy's letter fluttered unheeded to the path at my feet, for I was thinking of the time, twenty years ago, when he and I stood together by a newly-made grave in the little churchyard. Since then he had been my all, and now I must stand aside and see another taking my place. Well, well ! so long as he was happy ! The house and garden had not changed since he left. I had been careful to keep them just as he had last seen them, and

now he would soon be here. Perhaps the roses grew more thickly over the front of the house, and one of the old cherry trees that he used to climb when he was a boy had blown down. But that was all. We had even tried to keep the paths as he had; and all the —

"Ah! Mrs. Gordon," said a voice at my elbow, interrupting my reverie, "taking advantage of this lovely spring day, I see. Well, you couldn't be in a nicer place than your own garden," and Mr. Cheltnam took his seat at my side on the bench that stands under the pear tree on the moss-grown lawn.

"And so George speaks of coming home soon," he continued. "Well, I am glad of it, though that means that I shall lose Hilda. I've no great opinion of long engagements myself."

"It was unavoidable in this case," I answered rather stiffly; "besides, George is worth waiting for."

"Oh, of course, of course, George is a fine fellow. But one never knows how things may turn out."

I did not understand what he meant, so made no answer, and he began to tell me about a visit that Hilda was going to pay to London.

"But she'll be back long before George gets home," he added hastily.

"Of course," I answered, not attaching much importance to the fact of her going, as she was always away.

"She may as well have all the gaiety she can, you see. I expect things will be pretty quiet out there."

I thought they would, but I also thought that she would have George, and that would make up for it.

"Mrs. Cheltnam wants you to come round to see her this afternoon," said my neighbour, rising. "May I say that you will?"

We were old friends, the Cheltnams and I, and few days passed without a visit between the houses; that was how George had seen so much of Hilda and fallen in love with her pretty face as he watched it growing prettier each year. Even to me she was wonderfully charming, with her large blue eyes and golden hair and the dainty features and colouring of a Watteau shepherdess; I could almost understand my boy's infatuation, for her manners, when she chose, were just as dainty as her looks.

The months before his return went, to me, on leaden feet, but at last the day on which he would reach home arrived. For the hundredth time I went over the house to see that all was in order, and then I sat down in my quiet drawing-room, waiting. The large old clock ticked the minutes away, the doves cooed as they fluttered into the cot, and those were the only sounds that disturbed the stillness of the glowing summer day. Then all at once the gate swung quickly back on its hinges, somebody ran up the path, and before I could get to the door to open it, my heart beat so, the window of the room in which I sat was pushed open and my boy was in my arms.

"You've not altered a bit, mother; you look as young as ever, and I believe you have got on the very same black silk frock you used to wear before I went away."

It was the very same, my best, and I had put it on to do honour to him. I wished I could have said that he had not changed, but he had grown very thin, and there was a careworn look about his eyes that was new to me.

"I've not made my fortune yet," he said with his jolly laugh, "but I've not done badly. But what rot it is for people to think that money rains from the skies in the colonies. It is to be got, but, by Jove! you have to work for it, and I've worked as I never worked here, and turned my hand to everything, what's more. You wouldn't have known me sometimes, mother; but the worst's over, and when I go back it'll be pretty plain sailing, only I mustn't stay here long or things will all get out of gear."

I tried to hide my own disappointment as I asked with a smile:

"But what will Hilda say to that? Girls like a long time to buy their trousseau."

"Hilda's a brick and says she'll be ready."

And that told me that his first visit had been to her. We sat together on the faded old chintz-covered sofa as the afternoon waned, and he told me of what he had done out there, and though he made light of it, I could see that he had had a hard time, almost privation, though good fortune followed, and I felt proud of him. But right at the bottom of my heart there lurked a little sad feeling that my boy had lost his bright morning face, I felt for ever.

We were very festive in the village in honour of his return, and

my black brocade and old lace saw more service than they had done for a long time. George enjoyed it all, I could see, and his gay laugh and stalwart figure were quite a feature in all the gatherings. I could not help recalling what Mr. Addison wrote in one of his papers to the *Spectator* about travel being such education for an intelligent man, and I applied the saying to George, for I noticed that he held his own with all the elder gentlemen of the village, and that they listened to his views with respect.

"My dear Mrs. Gordon, I congratulate you! George has grown such a capital fellow! You must be proud of him," said Mr. Jeffreys, our old vicar, coming to me after the dinner they had given at the Vicarage for us, "only it makes one doubly sorry to lose him again, and then he takes my prettiest parishioner away with him," he added with a laugh.

I looked at Hilda; she was seated in the window talking to George, so lovely in her white dress, that my companion's description did her bare justice. She was not only by far the prettiest girl in our village, that was scant praise, but she would have been remarkable for her beauty in a much wider field. As I thought this, for the first time the question rose in my mind as to how she would suit the rough life she was going to. For hard I knew it to be, though my boy had toiled day and night to make it easy for her. She loved luxury, I knew that; she loved dainty clothes and living; but surely she must love George more than these? He was talking to her eagerly, and from the questioning way he kept looking in her face, I fancied he was telling her something that he hoped would please her, and she sat listening not very attentively, for I noticed that her hands kept arranging and re-arranging a trimming at the front of her dress, but occasionally she raised her eyes to his and smiled, and that seemed to satisfy him.

"He doesn't look quite the weight he used to be," said the vicar, who had been a boating man in his young days, and still occasionally lapsed into the phraseology of that time.

"He has worked so hard, you see."

"To be sure! To be sure! Well, it's for something well worth winning."

Hilda was coming towards us.

"Mrs. Gordon," she said in her clear, rather affected, voice,

"George has been telling me all about his house. I think he has been very clever to get one together so soon, don't you?"

"I am glad you think that, my dear," I answered, "and I hope you will be pleased with the house when you see it, and that it will be a happy home for you."

She smiled rather absently in answer.

"And the garden would please *you*, mother," said George eagerly. "I tried to copy the old one here, only everything is so hideously new and fresh that I don't believe it looks a bit the same. But there's a seat like yours under the pear tree, waiting ready for you when you come out to see us."

It was my turn to smile absently, for I felt that visit would never come off, but I wouldn't damp his pleasure by saying so.

"Ah, George, you make us old people long to be young," said Mr. Jeffreys, laying his hand on my boy's shoulder.

"Why, sir, it's nothing to go over there, and the boats are A 1. You couldn't be more comfortable; why, it's positive luxury."

I could see he was trying to make the best of it before Hilda, so I chimed in:

"They are floating palaces, I am told; George, your old home must look very shabby after all this."

"My old home is my dear old home," he answered simply, and the tears came into my eyes as I heard him.

"I think the steamers must be lovely," said Hilda, with more interest than she had yet shown, "and then I believe that you meet such nice people on them."

Poor George looked so pleased that I felt quite sad; it did not seem to strike him that her speech was hardly a compliment to himself.

"I am expecting Arthur down next week," said Mr. Jeffreys. "He tells me that he is bringing a friend with him, an Australian millionaire. Rather in your line, George; you will be able to compare notes."

"Not much of the millionaire about me," replied George ruefully.

"Never mind, my boy, never mind. We all have to make a beginning," said the vicar hastily. "Miss Hilda, give us a song to cover my unlucky remark."

As I listened to Hilda singing, the question of her fitness for her future again occurred to me, but this time I angrily closed

my ears to the tormenting doubt ; it was wanting in loyalty to my son's choice.

What glorious summer days those were that welcomed George back to his own country ! I recollect their cloudless brightness so well, and he revelled in them with a delight that does my heart good to look back on. He was constantly at the Cheltnams', of course, but he always found opportunity to keep me from feeling left out in the cold. The memory of that first part of his stay and the memory of his boyhood are linked together in my mind with the golden chain of his remembered happiness.

Our circle received quite an addition in the course of the next week. The vicar's son Arthur came down, bringing with him the friend Mr. Jeffreys had told us of. I met the two young men as I was going down the lane into the village, and I must say that the appearance of the Australian was most striking. I never remember seeing a shooting suit and necktie of so bold a pattern before. The face, too, above them was to my old-fashioned taste greatly wanting in refinement ; but then it is many years since I left our village, and I am told that young people have become less restrained in everything, even their dress, in that time.

Arthur presented his friend to me, and I found that his name was Robert Smith, and then they both turned and we walked towards the village together. Mr. Smith was just telling me of his impression of England, and I gathered that it was not a particularly favourable one, when I saw George and Hilda coming slowly towards us.

"You should change places with my son," I said, "for he does not like the colonies and must go back, and you do not care for England."

He laughed in a way I did not like, for my remark, though idle, was not meant to be a joke.

"Why, here is George !" interrupted Arthur Jeffreys. "And Hilda is with him."

I heard Mr. Smith mutter something under his breath. Of the beginning of the sentence I am by no means sure ; if it were not impossible I should have said that it sounded like an oath, but I caught the words "pretty girl," and knew that they referred to Hilda, for he was looking at her as if quite taken aback by her

beauty. She came up to us with the self-possession that never deserted her, though she must have seen the impression she made on Arthur's friend, and spoke to me; then she turned to the young men, and Mr. Smith was introduced to her.

"Glad to make your acquaintance," he said with a clumsy bow, and she smiled on him as kindly as if he had been the veriest courtier.

"Well, old fellow," said Arthur, turning to George, "the governor tells me that you're not going to stay over here any time. That's a mistake. You should make hay while the sun shines."

"That's just what I'm trying to do."

"Afraid the sheep will die if you're not there to physic them?"

"I'm not rich in sheep. But things go wrong, you know, if one's not there to look after them."

"Ah! that comes of being a man of property. Now a poor beggar like me could stay away from his business for ever and it'd be none the worse."

"And this is your first visit to England," I heard Hilda's clear voice saying. "And are you pleased with it? Pray do not say that you are not; I shall take it as quite personal."

"It is the finest land I have ever seen," replied Mr. Smith. "And the ladies are——" He stopped as if unable to find words to express his admiration.

Hilda laughed, and I could see that she was gratified, though I thought the young man too free.

"You live here?" he asked presently, and waited with attention for her answer.

"Oh, yes. That is our house, the white one, along the road to the left. We shall see you, no doubt. Mr. Jeffreys is an old friend of ours."

He looked from her to me as if he were speculating on our relationship to each other, and I should have liked to tell him at once exactly what it was. But Arthur was sure to do that and nip this little flirtation in the bud.

"Well, good-bye, old chap," said Arthur Jeffreys, leaving George's side. "Come and have a pipe to-night, and tell us some more about the blacks. Come, Smith, we mustn't keep Mrs. Gordon any longer." And the two young men left us, raising

their hats, Mr. Smith's bow being directed to Hilda in the most marked manner.

"And so that is the millionaire," said Hilda, looking after them.

"I don't think much of his clothes," returned George. "He looks a bounder too."

Which is, I suppose, a colonial term of contempt. Hilda did not answer, and the young man was so little in my style that I had nothing to say in his praise, so kept silence.

A few days after this we were invited to tennis at the Cheltnams', and almost the first person I saw as I went into the garden was Mr. Smith in a costume that was rather more *voyant* than his first one. Hilda also had on a new and very pretty dress that had the effect of making the wearer look particularly bewitching. They were talking together, and were evidently on the best terms.

"This is not quite in our line," said Mr. Jeffreys, fetching me a garden chair; "I am too old for it, and you, Mrs. Gordon, are too graceful for it. But let us look on together."

Our vicar paid his little compliments with the elegance of forty years ago when we were boy and girl together, and he had not forgotten how to say charming things in a charming way to his old friend.

The first game was played by Mr. Smith, Hilda, George and Arthur. I am no judge of play, but it seemed to me that my boy held his own amongst them. Mr. Smith and Hilda were partners, and I could hear him praising her way of playing, which I am told is very good. When it was over they came and stood near us, and the Australian hovered about her in a way I did not like; for he must have been told of her engagement to George.

"Now, Miss Cheltnam," he began, "you're so awfully rough on a fellow, I couldn't take all the balls."

"I didn't expect you to take all, only one now and then, just to keep them from winning."

"You shouldn't, you really shouldn't jump on a fellow like that."

"No, Hilda," said Arthur, looking laughingly at his friend's somewhat stout figure. "You should spare him, he's such a weakling."

Hilda laughed.

"Then perhaps, Mr. Smith, you might like some tea to support you. I will show you where it is to be had."

George looked as if he expected her to include him in the invitation, but she did not, and I fancied that he had a pained expression on his face as they walked towards the dining-room. Arthur must have had the same thought, for he smacked George on the back and said in his cheery way :

"Now, old man, wake up. These dreamy manners may fascinate the blacks, but we're not educated up to them. I'm going to take Mrs. Gordon to get some tea, and you'd better come too."

"What a remarkably well-informed young fellow that friend of yours is, Arthur," said Mr. Cheltnam, joining us in the dining-room, where Mr. Smith and Hilda were carrying on their interrupted talk with bursts of noisy laughter.

"Oh, he's a good sort enough."

"Now, what do you suppose that he's worth?" continued Mr. Cheltnam curiously. "I've been told that it's a million, but that's impossible, I suppose."

"Oh, somewhere about that," was Arthur's careless answer as he pushed forward an easy-chair for me.

"Dear me! dear me! is he now? Well, he's a lucky man!"

Arthur laughed, for Mr. Cheltnam's worship of money was well known to us all.

"I should just like to have a little more talk with him about Melbourne," continued Mr. Cheltnam, hastily crossing the room to pay homage to the lucky man in question, who appeared anything but glad at his approach, while Hilda frowned in a way that was rather peculiar under the circumstances. I hoped that George had not seen it, and I do not think that he had, for he was unsuspicious as a child, and when I saw the open honest look on his brave young face, I blamed myself for my uncharitable nature; but being a silent person it has always been my habit to observe both people and things closely, without, heaven knows, any intention of fastening evil on them, though perhaps in this case I was rather more censorious than usual; but then my son's happiness was at stake.

That was the beginning of a great many parties at all of which Mr. Smith figured. I saw nothing to make me alter my first opinion of his want of refinement, but nobody else seemed

to observe it, and he was rather popular on the whole. The Cheltnams, particularly, found him remarkably entertaining, for I saw him, or heard of him, at their house almost every day. And I think that it was about this time that George began to talk of his return to Africa. Preparations for the wedding had been going on in a quiet way ever since his arrival. Hilda had bought a great many of her things, and though the date was not actually fixed, we understood that it would be in rather more than a month.

George and I were sitting one evening under the old pear tree on the lawn, and he was telling me that he would have to go up to London to buy some things he wanted to take back with him, and make several business arrangements.

"And then," he said, "I shall take our berths."

I knew this meant parting, and I put my withered hand on his strong brown one as it lay on the bench beside me. He bent and kissed my forehead, and I felt that he understood my grief at his going, though I would not speak of it to distress him.

He left for town a day or two afterwards, and I saw rather less of the young people while he was gone. I went to the Cheltnams' as usual, but Hilda chanced each time to be out, and knowing that she must be hard at work with preparations, I paid no attention to her absence. But one evening, as I was going to the Vicarage, a little incident caused me to alter this inattention, and made me long for the wedding to be happily over, though that would be hastening George's departure. I saw under the shade of the lime trees that edge the road, two figures walking slowly together, and I quickly recognized them for Hilda and Mr. Smith. There was something particularly lover-like in the way they were sauntering along and the frequent pauses they made. I cannot say that I was so much surprised as vexed at the sight, for I always knew Hilda to be hungry after admiration, and the Australian's free expression of it had flattered her from the first. I would not admit, even to myself, that their being together in this way was anything more serious on her side than thoughtless vanity, and I stoutly clung to my old belief that once married she would make George a good wife. A bye-path turned off to my left, and I took it, not wishing to embarrass the pair by meeting them just then. I found Mr. Jeffreys pruning his rose trees, and after getting his promise to assist a girl in the village, I began to

talk of his guest, hoping to hear that his visit was nearly at an end.

"Mr. Smith is making a long stay with you," I observed tentatively.

"Ay," answered the vicar carelessly. "I fancied that he would have found us such quiet folk that he would have gone long ago."

"I daresay he will be going back to London soon."

"Well, I believe not; Arthur tells me that he thinks of staying some time longer. I'm not exactly glad to hear it, for though he's a good enough fellow, he's not quite my style. I can say this to you without any fear of being thought inhospitable."

My little hope died, and I went rather sadly back to my own quiet house, doubly quiet now with the impending parting with what I most loved hanging over me.

George came home next day in the highest spirits. He was full of his plans for the future. He had bought several things to furnish his house that he was sure Hilda would like; and he had been over the ship they were to go out in, and was also sure that she would like that. I could see that parting with me was the only thing that at all damped his joy, and did my best to make light of it to him.

He left me early to go to the Cheltnams', but I was surprised that he came back almost immediately, looking annoyed and crestfallen.

"That bounding beast Smith was there," he said, throwing himself on his old chair in a tired way. And I felt angry, for I could imagine the sort of scene that had checked his high spirits like a douche of icy water.

"Mother," he continued, "have you seen much of him at the Cheltnams'? He seemed on precious easy terms there."

"No," I answered, thankful to be able to say it, "I have not seen him there once since you went away." It was quite unnecessary to tell him of having met Mr. Smith and Hilda walking together. It would be giving the fact an importance it did not possess.

"Have you noticed Hilda looking pale or anything?" he asked presently. "She was so quiet to-night that I was afraid she was not well."

"Oh, I don't think it was anything; perhaps she was tired."

But the explanation did not satisfy him, and he was very silent all the evening. Long after I had gone to my room, I heard him

moving about in his, as he used to when he was a lad and anything had excited him. I could see that he was fidgeting to get away all breakfast time next morning, but I purposely put little delays in his way, for Mrs. Cheltnam disliked too early visitors, and I did not want him to do anything that would offend her just then.

However, at last he would wait no longer, and I walked down the path to the gate with him, and watched his active young figure going quickly down the road. At the bend he turned, and seeing me still at the gate, he waved his hand, while the sunniest smile lit up his face. Things that are small in themselves get stamped on one's mind by what comes after them, and that look and smile I shall never forget.

The day passed quickly with me, for I am always a busy person; and as he did not come back I was glad to think that any little cloud that existed had been explained away. So I sat waiting for him in the drawing-room, prepared to meet him in a mood as happy as his own. I had just told Emma that I would not wait dinner, as he would probably be dining at the Cheltnams', when I heard him coming draggingly up the path. A presentiment almost prevented my moving, but I forced myself to go to the door as if I suspected nothing had happened. There I saw him pausing in the porch evidently trying to look himself, though his poor face was so pale that I was frightened.

When he caught sight of me he smiled in a wan way.

"Late for dinner," he said, attempting to be jovial. "Mother, you shouldn't have waited; I've been for a long walk and am awfully tired."

"Where to?" I asked, pretending not to have seen that anything was amiss

"To Carstone," which is a village at least fifteen miles off.

He was terribly absent at dinner, and I noticed that he ate nothing, just cutting up the food and leaving it untouched on his plate. I could ask him no question; he would tell me all, I knew, when we were together in the quiet room that had been the scene of confession of most of his boyish troubles. And he did. Sitting beside me on the little low sofa he said suddenly:

"It is all off with Hilda and me."

"What!" I cried.

"Don't ask me any questions, mother dear. Perhaps I'll tell

you another time, but not to-night. And I think I'll just go upstairs. You won't mind?"

I should not have minded anything that was a comfort to him, though I grieved that the days were over when he used in his childish sorrows to throw his arms round me and let me soothe away the bitterness of them.

He told me next day that when he got to the Cheltnams', Hilda had seen him alone and told him that, though she was sorry to break off her engagement, she felt as the time drew near for her to leave England that she could not possibly do it. She said she ought never to have promised, for she could not bear to part from her parents and everybody she knew and liked. She did not speak of having ceased to care for him, only of her dread of the rough life abroad. I do not fancy that he urged her to keep her promise, or reproached her for her cruel selfishness in allowing him to hope so long. He just left her without a word and started off on that long solitary walk, the anguish of which I hardly dare to recall.

The people in the village treated the breaking off of the engagement very much as people do treat an uncomfortable occurrence in which two friends whom they know equally well are concerned. After the first blush it was never mentioned, and Hilda's departure on a visit to her sister made this more easy. Nobody was surprised at what she had done: from one or two remarks made to me I gathered that those who knew her best were only surprised that she had kept faithful so long.

"And better now than afterwards," was the general verdict.

In the chill shortening days that followed I had my boy all to myself, and we seemed—though there was a chasm between, to which we never referred—to have gone back to the old days before he went away. Once, with desperate hope, I hinted at his giving up his business in Africa and beginning afresh with me, but I saw that it was of no use, and never spoke of it again.

It was one still September morning that he went away. The sun was shining brightly on the remaining flowers as if trying to warm them into a semblance of their past beauty, and the birds were singing busily before their coming long silence. We went down the path as we so often had done; and at the gate I bid him good-bye just as I should if he had been leaving me for a short visit—we would not recognize what our parting might be. I

watched him going down the road as I watched him when he went to see Hilda for the last time, but he did not turn when he got to the bend now, and I went slowly back into my lonely house.

Life in the village went on in its old routine after his departure. The winter following was a very severe one; and in the midst of our snow and frost his letters describing the heat out there seemed to me pleasant and bright. He always wrote very cheerfully, telling me of the different things he was doing and how he was succeeding; and once he spoke—but that was after I told him of Hilda Cheltnam's marriage to Mr. Smith in the spring—of coming home again to see me.

Hilda's wedding was from her sister's house, I am glad to say; I could not have borne to have gone to it or seen much of it. I sometimes hear of the great state in which she lives; and I feel that she would never have made my boy happy, so perhaps the lookers-on were right. "Better before marriage than after."

It was nearly a year after George left me that I was sitting on my usual seat under the pear tree one hot drowsy afternoon. My quiet life must encourage habits of growing old age, for I dozed first of all, and then went off into a sleep and dreamt of my son, as I so often do. A movement near woke me with a start, and I saw Mr. Jeffreys coming very slowly round the house. Gathering my shawl round me, I rose with a laugh and went to meet him.

"You caught me napping," I said. "See what an old woman I'm getting."

"It is very warm," he answered in a constrained voice. "I don't wonder that you went to sleep. Let us come into the drawing-room out of the sun."

I thought his manner so peculiar that I began to wonder what could have brought him—what he could possibly have to say. When we got into the drawing-room he closed the door behind us, and taking my hand led me to my chair, then stood before me with the sun shining full on his snow-white hair.

"My dear old friend," he said, and there was a little break in his voice, "I have known you so long that I feel the best and kindest thing to do is to tell you at once that I have had bad news of George. You will be brave, as you always are."

For a moment the light went out of the room.

"Tell me what it is," I heard my own voice as if it belonged to another person saying presently.

Mr. Jeffreys drew a chair to mine and again took my hand—holding it firmly to give me support.

"He has been very ill, I fear," he said.

"Yes?"

"Very, very ill!"

"He is coming home an invalid?"

"No!"

And then I understood. My boy was dead.

A long time afterwards I saw a letter written by a friend of his to Mr. Jeffreys at his request when he knew there was no hope, asking that the news should be broken gently to me. His friend wrote that he had never been really well since his return from England, and that was why he had not been able to rally from a sharp attack of fever. He talked constantly of me, and hoped that I should not miss him very much, and indeed, as time goes on I do so less and less, for I seem to be getting so near to him and his father that it is not worth while to fret, because it is such a very little space that now divides us.

HANNAH MARTIN.

An Incident of the Cholera in Spain.

I.

ONLY a Spanish lad of seventeen or so, poverty-stricken, obscurity-hidden, yet as true, a hero, in the best sense of the word, as the world has known.

He was in no whit different from any one of his fellows ; there was nothing particularly heroic about his appearance, nothing to distinguish him among the crowd of youths of his own age, a company of whom—their olive skins, flashing black eyes, and picturesque costumes of themselves offering bits of colour that would have sent the passion for representation tingling to the very finger-tips of an artist—were wont to hang about in the streets and *plazas* of sunny, white-walled, languid-atmosphered Llevisa. There, in the eating of oranges and *turrone*s, the smoking of innumerable cigarettes, and the hearing and telling of bull-fight gossip, he lived his glowing southern life on the approved principle of getting the very most out of it on the score of enjoyment that the passing day could give him. *Dum vivimus, vivamus*, was the unspoken motto of his life, and he lived up to it for all he was worth. He worked, when occasion called upon him to work ; but his wants were few and easily supplied. Given one single peseta, value ninepence half-penny, in the pocket of his ragged breeches, and it was enough : till his money was spent, Pedro Alvarez took holiday without scruple or hindrance.

In the eyes of present-day moralists, all the religion he had to boast of would have amounted simply to nothing. He fell on his knees devoutly whenever the tinkle of a silver bell announced the passing by of the Host ; he had as utter and orthodox a horror of a heretic as of cold water—other than for drinking purposes ; he enjoyed the processions and shows of Holy Week with all his heart and soul—though it did not enter his head to note the special events supposed to be commemorated thereby, and he confessed whenever occasion or conscience seemed to

require it. There his religion, so to speak, ended : the devoted and passionate love with which he regarded not alone his widowed mother and the sister to whom he stood as sole protector, but those whom he chose to reckon his friends, not coming under this heading, of course. In these days of enlightenment and higher culture his ignorance was equally surprising. Had any one attempted to explain to him the meaning of *altruism*, for example, Pedro would only have stared uncomprehendingly ; and, while rejoicing, with the unfailing courtesy of his nation, "*No entiendo, señor,*" would have retired entertaining private doubts of his informant's sanity. Perhaps his utter ignorance of the meaning of the term only helped him eventually to the better living out of it. So time slipped away with him until the summer that the cholera came to Spain, and, in due course, following inexorably where the finger of defective sanitation unerringly pointed out the way, to Llevisa.

Then for one awful week there was a reign of terror within the walls, a grim, unseen horror overshadowing the outwardly fair city. Among the very first upon whom the dread enemy laid its cold hand was the Álvarez family ; and within two days after the first fatal outbreak, Pedro, motherless, sisterless, and to all intents and purposes homeless, wandered, a lonely outcast, about the hot and dusty streets. He had unwound the yellow silk sash or *faja* from his waist, and replaced it by one of rusty black ; the *borlas* or tassels to match, lately decorating the hat worn so jauntily to one side, had in like manner been torn ruthlessly from their places, and with nothing but these poor signs of mourning to bear silent but eloquent witness to his loss and sorrow, he left the spot that he could no longer call home, to wander restlessly about the streets. Past the fountain in the *plaza*, through quaint horse-shoe arch and Moorish gateway, on by the fragments of decaying ruins—their beauties, a memory of the past, hidden beneath the inevitable present-day coating of whitewash or stucco—the 'spirit of restlessness urged him. Fragments of history, over which a tourist would have gloated for hours, lay on either hand, or, in the form of slender pillar, crumbling gable, or decaying arch, soared high above his head as he traversed the narrower and older streets ; but they obtained from this son of the people scarcely more than a passing glance, for the eyes of the ignorant are proverbially blind. What did it

matter to him that the gateway leading to the *patio* of the house on his left, a miracle of art, with the delicate lacework tracery of the workmanship, dated back to a period earlier than the fourteenth century; that those oddly-fashioned blue and white tiles, let into the woodwork above, were treasures that English strangers would travel miles to see? The *Qué se me da á mí?* element was very strong in Pedro Alvarez: hence to him all such things counted as far less worthy of notice than the huge posters disfiguring the wall just beyond, at which, although he could not read a word of them, he had been wont to gaze with a mixture of awed delight and curiosity. He could comprehend their signification at least; knew for what the three words at the top stood, printed in the largest and blackest of type; knew, too, that beneath them, with that flow of the grandiloquent in which your true Spaniard delights, it was duly set forth that on such a date, and at such an hour, six "bulls of death" from the noted herds of the most famous breeder in Spain were doomed to bite the dust beneath the sword of the celebrated *torero*, Leon Marcial Diaz, the prince of the noble art of *tauromaquia* in the south of the Peninsula.

To the lonely and homeless a crowd is attractive. Trace the instinctive longing for the society and companionship of one's fellow-creatures to what source you will, it is there. As safety is said to exist, so there may be sympathy, long drawn out, distilled, in numbers. Where the crowd led Pedro Alvarez followed instinctively, but without remembering that the day was Sunday, and in consequence that set apart for the bull-fight.

"Ah, pardon, señor, I did not see you."

Some one, running heedlessly or blindly past, had brushed roughly against the lad as he made his way listlessly along. It was a child, and a small child at that, an olive-skinned, black-eyed girl of nine or ten years' or so. Her head was protected from the glare of the afternoon sun only by the long tresses of thick dark hair, the glory of the daughters of Spain, and bare too were the small brown feet revealed by the short gay skirt. A street child, her manners as free and easy as those of the rest of her class, her glances each a flash of dark-eyed witchery; yet with the instinctive inborn Spanish courtesy ever present to round off the crude angles, to take the sting out of the smart jest sure to be called forth on an ordinary occasion by this chance collision

with the tall lad. But the eyes that looked up at the latter now were heavy and tear-dimmed beneath their long lashes, and the voice was quivering on the verge of a sob. Each recognized the other in an instant.

"Mariquita! You! And in tears. What is the matter?"

"Ah, Pedro, for the love of heaven do not hinder me! Indeed, I dare not stay."

The trembling voice broke down, and the speaker, as if regretting even this momentary delay, darted up the street with the speed of a lapwing. Not alone, however; Pedro, eager and questioning, kept easily by her side.

"But, *niñita*, tell me—where are you going?"

"Ah, do not stop me! To the Plaza de Toros!"

"The Plaza de Toros?"

"Yes, yes! It is Carlos that I want—do you not see? It is for Ines, Pedro; Ines, my sister, my darling—she is dying!"

Mariquita sobbed out her story as the two hurried along. How, barely two hours ago, *it*—there was no need to particularize further what was meant—had struck down Ines, her dearly-loved sister; how an old neighbour, the only one at hand to give help or comfort to the orphaned sisters, had declared the case to be one beyond hope; and how the sick girl, already, it would seem, in the cold grip of the skeleton fingers, had moaned out an earnest wish to bid her lover farewell. No need to explain to Pedro further. Carlos Desgracia was an intimate of his own; and as one of the *chulos* belonging to the *cuadrilla* or troupe of Leon Marcial Diaz, would be that afternoon at his accustomed post.

"I sent Pepe, that little lad, to the Plaza to tell him—I had no one else," sobbed the heart-broken sister. "But Ines is sinking fast, and he has not come. And Pepito is but a child, he scarcely understands; and he would linger to watch for Diaz, to see the *picadores* ride in, to look at all that passes, and forget the errand."

As if impelled by the recollection to further exertions, she quickened her pace as she spoke. But Pedro laid his hand on her arm and detained her.

"Listen!" he said abruptly. "I will go to the Plaza; it is not for a girl like you to go there alone. Besides, I am known as a friend of Carlos, and I can get to him without

hindrance. Now go back to Ines, little one, and I will send him to you."

Mariquita sobbed out her thanks. "You will find him, Perico, *por cierto*? He will be sure to come?"

"By that cross he shall!" He made the sign with his fingers as he spoke, and the two parted; Mariquita to hasten back to her dying sister, Pedro Alvarez to run like a greyhound to the Plaza de Toros. Those who cling to the common belief that the natives of Spain are utterly incapable of physical exertion, in place of being actually agile and swift-footed beyond ordinary, would have been sensible of a rude shock to their convictions had they seen the speed with which he threaded his course then through the crowded streets. Three minutes after parting from Mariquita he had reached his destination, and was shouldering and elbowing a path for himself through the crowd already surging round the *entrada general*.

The scene around him was a curious and characteristic one, intensely Spanish in all its bearings. The inevitable beggars were well to the fore, of course, pleading for charity from all the passers-by, not excepting even the groups of gorgeously-attired bull-fighters themselves, passing on their way to the entrance; a plea seldom refused, by the way, for the heroes of the ring are not as a rule more niggardly of their earnings than careful of their lives. A strange and motley scene, in which the figures, with their intense individuality, vivid colouring and characteristic dress, from the bright handkerchiefs on the heads of the women, the smart *majo*, or peasant-dandy costume of the younger men, and the brilliant showy attire of the *toreros* themselves, stood out with the sharpness of cameos. A living picture, every figure instinct with vitality, with movement; its background the white houses and walls of the southern city, and high overhead the blue brilliant sky of sunny Spain. A scene of human life, human activity, the pursuit of pleasure, of excitement its one aim; show, glitter and gaiety its leading characteristics; yet not wanting in pathos to those who cared to look just beneath the surface.

See yonder stalwart horseman, pressing his way with good-humoured indifference through the throngs, the crowd parting and falling back to clear a passage for the poor doomed brute that carries him—doomed, for while the rider *may* possibly lose

his life, the horse *must* die. Now he halts, draws rein and bends down from the saddle, a smile breaking over his swarthy dare-devil face. A woman has run out from a group near the entrance, and is lifting a chubby crowing child to the saddle before him ; that is all. Nothing more, and the horse moves on a moment later : yet the simple action is enough to tell that the time of the *corrida* will be an anxious one for the wife of the *picador* in her work at home ; a sound in the street outside will send the blood from cheek and lip, and her glances at the unconscious child at play beside her will hint over and over again the possibility of its having heard for the last time its father's voice. But to all this Pedro Alvarez was too well accustomed to heed it ; intent only on his errand, he had turned away from the general entrance to a small private door, where his recognition as a friend of one of the *cuadrilla* speedily gained him admittance.

II.

MARIQUITA had done injustice to her boyish messenger ; the child had delivered his errand. Pedro had scarcely taken two or three steps along a dark and narrow passage, when some one, coming hastily in the opposite direction, ran almost into his arms. One glance, and he recognized the man of whom he was in search.

Carlos Desgracia was barely four years his friend's senior, keen-eyed, agile, clean and lithe of limb, as in good truth he would need to be, for upon his perfection in these respects depended his life. His frame, shown to the best possible advantage by his close-fitting dress, though slight, was well knit and muscular, and owned not an ounce of superfluous flesh, owing to the rigorous training to which he had been subjected for the past few years. His were the fine dark eyes, well-cut features, and graceful bearing of the typical Andalusian ; and in him at least, thanks perhaps to his youth, or to a possible latent capacity for better things, there was as yet no trace of the repulsiveness, the aspect of brutality, stamped by a brutal sport upon so many of its votaries. But the youth, for he was nothing more, was at present labouring under strong excitement. His nostrils quivered, his black eyes had an angry flash in them, and his teeth were hard set beneath the pale trembling lips ;

while not one whit more vivid was the crimson cloak he carried than the red resentful glow now dyeing his olive-tinted skin. The recognition of each was simultaneous.

"Pedro! You here? But I know your errand—you need not speak."

"Then you know that there is scant time to lose. But—what would you do? What is the matter with you, man?"

For answer the young bull-fighter tore the crimson cloak from his arm, flung the jaunty velvet cap from his head, and, with all the force of which he was capable, dashed them to the ground. His green silk jacket, richly garnished with arabesques of glittering silver, followed suit; and with a gesture of contempt he sprang forward, and setting his foot first on one and then the other, deliberately trampled these, the insignia of his profession, in the dust. Then he turned suddenly on his mystified friend. His face had been crimson before, with anger or shame, but it was pale enough now.

"The matter is that this cursed dress and I part company for ever. Think of it, Perico! This empresario, has he a heart, think you? Was it much to ask, permission to leave, for once; when she, my Ines——"

His voice faltered there and he broke off abruptly. But there was more to say, and a ring of passionate anguish hurried the other broken sentences along.

"That was all I asked—one little hour. But no! We are short-handed already, thanks to this cursed cholera, and to go now—well, then, I need not trouble to return, that is all. Let it be so! What care I? There, and there, and there." The hot southern blood was at fever heat, and with each reiterated word he stamped his foot passionately on the discarded garments in the dust.

"And Diaz? What said he?"

Carlos laughed the mocking laugh of reckless despair.

"Diaz! He? The man has less heart than one of the toros. *Caramba!* when he bade me wait, for that an hour or so could make little matter, I could have seized the sword at his elbow and turned it upon himself. Wait, said he? *Will the cholera wait?* . . . Lend me your *capa, amigo*. Had I my clothes here, the son of my father would prove to the eyes of all that he had done with the *cuadrilla* of Leon Diaz for ever!"

He seized the cloak handed to him by Pedro and shrouded himself in its ample folds, by way of hiding the depredations already made on his costume. For his part, Pedro stooped and silently lifted the jacket, cap and gay silken cloak, shaking the dust in turn from each. Not until he had got all three into his hands did he stand up and face his friend. The latter, with a gesture denoting utter contempt, as if shaking the dust of the bull-ring from his feet, had turned to go on his sad errand.

"But the mother? The children?"

Carlos did not answer. Yet he halted, sharply, for he understood. Love and reverence towards parents is a strong characteristic of the youth of Spain; and none knew better than the young *chulo* that not alone his aged father and mother, but three or four small brothers and sisters, were entirely dependent upon the three pounds or so, the stake at which he was in the habit of setting his life every Sunday throughout the "season," with an occasional engagement thrown in between on a week day. It was a hard strait for a youth of two-and-twenty; and the hideous spectre of cholera was already a dire enough phantom to face, without a prospect of coming to closer quarters with the gaunt grim wolf of famine ever dogging its steps, and already visible through the shadowy drapery of its skirts. He turned round on his friend, his face white with the agony of conflicting feelings.

"*Dios mio!* It is hard! I am between the sword and the wall."

Pedro was not looking at him. One of the silver arabesques had become detached from the brilliant green jacket, and he was searching for it among the dust at his feet. Having secured it, he stood erect and met the other's eyes.

"Go," he said briefly. "But first—I have these, but I want the rest."

"What mean you?"

"Only that I have sworn you shall go, and go you shall! Yet one of the *cuadrilla* shall not be missing, nor the mother and children starve."

Carlos stared at his friend, as if doubting the evidence of his ears.

"It is nothing, *hijo mio*. Give me your clothes, your *capa* here, and the thing is done. We are the same height, you and I, and not so much unlike in feature."

The other still gazed wonderingly at him, and the hard expression on his face softened strangely, then vanished altogether as he caught his friend's hand.

"You are good, Perico, too good a friend for one such as I, but it cannot be! How could I let you run this risk? If you came to harm your blood would be on my hands for ever."

"I shall come to no harm," persisted the younger lad earnestly, forgetting himself altogether in his sympathy with his friend and desire to serve him. "Have I not seen you play the part a thousand times, and do I not know it by heart?"

"*Querido*, it is utter madness! The first to-day is El Bravo, of the Miura breed. . . . And you have had neither experience nor training."

But Pedro, lost in his generous self-surrender to all considerations of prudence, could meet and parry even so indisputable a fact as that.

"True it is. Yet have I not heard you say hundreds of times that a cool head, a quick eye and active limbs were all that a man needed in the ring, after all? Look at me, man. Will not mine serve my turn for once?"

The other still eyed him doubtfully, a host of varied emotions chasing each other over his dark handsome face. It was the conflict between love and friendship; and, as is almost inevitable when two such alternatives are involved, the former won.

"Come, then!" he cried almost fiercely, seizing his friend by the arm and dragging him towards a recess where they could be hidden from view. "*Madre de Dios!* that I should be tempted thus. . . Yet it is for her, for her alone. Now, Pedro, quick! Quick, I say! The time is all but gone!"

And they were quick. In less time than it had ever taken him before, Carlos had stripped off his glittering dress and was helping his substitute to don it, fastening the gay jacket and orthodox silk sash with trembling fingers, and draping the show silken cloak—to be presently exchanged for the tattered one in actual use during the combat—in correct style over the arm of his friend. The clothes fitted the latter perfectly, for the two youths were much the same as regarded height; and for the rest, Pedro, though four years the other's junior, was fully as well-built and manly in appearance as the young bull-fighter. Above their heads the echoing tramp of feet told that the spectators were

taking their places, and beyond the recess in which they stood the crowd was still pouring in ; a confused hum of voices, of careless mirth, free jest and smart repartee, coming plainly to their ears. Here were the sharpest contrasts, as must ever be the case when lookers-on and players are concerned : the comedy of life, and its intensest depth of tragedy, within touch, and parted from one another merely by the slight partition of a few boards.

Carlos, his eyes shining like stars with the force of the mingled emotions that swayed him, looked his friend critically over, and stepping back, silently wrung his hand. Three minutes later, dressed in the shabby clothes of his companion and muffled to the eyes in the latter's cloak, he slipped out into the street, while Pedro, obeying his last hurried directions, found himself outside the recess, in the middle of the glittering group formed by the waiting *caadrilla*. Several of the men stared at him curiously, but although a word or two of remonstrance came to his ears, no one seemed to care to interfere actively in the matter. Already the presence of the cholera had begun to make itself felt ; that day, as Carlos had hinted, there would be no substitutes, and another defaulter could not well be spared : indeed, in view of these and other circumstances, it had at one time been thought advisable to put off the fight. But the fear of an outbreak among the people, who, in spite of the nominal authority of the president, are the actual rulers of these spectacles, induced the authorities to remain inactive and to permit the amusement. So the signal was given, the trumpet sounded ; and the young lad, in the complete forgetfulness of self which must of necessity lie at the root of every generous action, went forward, for the sake of his friend, to meet and to brave a dreadful death.

He could not but feel strange when, a few minutes later, he found himself making one of the customary procession, as, headed by the redoubtable Diaz himself, it slowly filed round the arena. Had the latter glanced with any heed at his men, in place of merely flinging away the cigarette he had been smoking and stepping to his post at their head with all his wonted swagger and off-hand bearing, he must have noticed the defection of Carlos Desgracia. But the latter's substitute contrived to hang in the background, sheltering himself behind one of the miserable hacks ridden by the *picadores* ; so that the familiar habili-

ments alone caught the eye, and the face of the wearer escaped notice altogether. Immediately afterwards, in obedience to a sign from one of his companions, who, having a shrewd guess as to how matters stood, was willing to do a good turn for a comrade's sake, he was standing in his appointed place, close to the barrier, his eyes fixed on the great iron gates opposite, beyond which was the *toril*, waiting for the bull. The game had begun, a game in which life was the stake and "Væ victis" the motto.

III.

How long the gates were in opening—and the bull—Ha! there he came at last, in good earnest, ready for the fray too. Ay, thoroughly ready for it the huge black brute looked, as with lowered head and gleaming horns he trotted forth from his den to the middle of the arena, to be greeted with a deafening roar of welcome, excitement and execrations from the vast multitude assembled above. Slowly his red eyes glanced from one to another of the gorgeous resplendent figures before him, motionless as statues, but watchful as cats, as if doubtful with which to begin; and Pedro, as he eyed him, realized, with a momentary quickening of his pulses, that this was no other than the bull of the *corrida*, El Bravo himself.

The pause was not a long one. In another moment one of the *picadores*, eager to have first innings in the dreadful, dangerous game, spurred his blindfolded horse a few paces forward and succeeded in drawing the bull's attention to himself. This, so to speak, opened the ball; for El Bravo, true to his name, was, to borrow a term from the slang of the bull-ring, as *bueno a toro* as had ever appeared in Llevisa, and stood in need of no rousing to the attack. Then the revolting, demoralizing spectacle, with the fearful peril menacing human life, with the nameless barbarities inflicted on the helpless brutes that formed its living victims, began. But to this aspect of the life and death struggle in which he now found himself irrevocably engaged, Pedro Alvarez was altogether blind. No *majo*, no sample of young Spain, in the full enjoyment of his national pastime, shouting himself hoarse with mad excitement over the prowess of his favourite *lidiador*, or hissing with equal vehemence his smallest slip, had been accustomed to enter more thoroughly than himself, heart

and soul, into the demoralizing sport. Brought up as he had been, it would have been strange, all but impossible, had there existed for him a game on earth half so exciting as the *corrida*, any greater heroes than the athletic combatants of the ring. As an instance of the peculiar, almost incomprehensible ascendancy exercised by the national sport over its devotees, it is enough to say that had Pedro Alvarez been asked the question, a day or two ago, as to which man throughout the length and breadth of Spain he reckoned most worthy of envy, his answer would have been as unhesitating as prompt. Not the sagacious statesman Sagasta, not Castelar of the silver tongue, not even his most Catholic Majesty Alfonso XII. himself; but the famous *torero*, the renowned *primer espada*, Leon Marcial Diaz. In like manner, to go back a few years further, Serrano, Topete, even Prim himself, would have ranked far below such noted bull-fighters as Montes, José Delgado and Frascuelo; while it goes without saying that Espartero the patriot must have taken a place immeasurably lower than Espartero the *matador*.

Hark! what is that? A heavy crash, a muffled groan—a *picador* is down, horse and all; the poor blindfolded brute has stumbled and the two lie prostrate together on the sand of the arena. And there, not six yards distant, up comes Toro, his fierce eyes fixed on his destined victims, intent only on their destruction, and heedless of the frantic exertions of the other *chulos*, harassing him in flank and rear, but unable to succeed in distracting him from his game. Now's your time, Pedro! in the position you occupy now, it all depends upon, all rests with you. To hesitate means certain death to yonder poor fellow, father and sole support of six hungry children at home, to whom not alone his fallen steed, but the cumbersome garments he wears, padded to a sufficient depth to resist a horn thrust, are bidding fair to prove fatal. There is the unfortunate horse, too, for any one that may care to heed it, now struggling to regain its feet, and—shame that it must be said—unpitied of one single human being in that vast multitude. What matter! In the eyes of public and performers alike, the horse is only part of the show; it was brought there to be killed and must fulfil its destiny. But it is not upon the unconscious horse, now standing broadside on to those long sharp horns, that the fierce red eyes of the brute coming on in his resistless charge are fixed; the destined victim

is the rider, who, injured by his fall and completely helpless, is at the mercy of the infuriated bull. It is an awful moment, for a human life is trembling in the very balance, on the verge of a terrible fate. A breathless suspense holds that vast circle of spectators silent, save for a hissing prolonged gasp, the concentrated feeling of thousands, sent up by the congested masses above. But human sacrifice at least is no part of the sport, and Diaz, his swagger and the air of cool *insouciance* with which, while awaiting his turn, he has been watching the fight, now completely lost sight of, lays his hand on the barrier and vaults into the arena, his bright sharp Toledo beneath his arm, ready, with the characteristic daring that will lead him in a few minutes to face the bull single-handed, to come to close quarters with him now. But there is no need for the *matador* to anticipate himself to end the tragedy before its time. Novice though he may be, Pedro Alvarez knows the duty demanded from him as the substitute of Desgracia, and he does it for all he is worth. Let but his foot slip, let the slightest accident induce him to stagger at that supreme moment, and a fate too terrible to contemplate will be his. So near is he to the bull that the hot breath surges up in his face and the rough hide actually brushes him as he flings the tattered yet ample folds of the crimson *capa* before those eyes of glowing flame; so near that, as the beast, staggering blindly in his headlong rush, turns towards this new adversary, one of those sharp horns, touching the thigh of the latter, sends a slight stream of blood trickling down those gay silk 'hose; so near that, in his flying leap at the barrier rising breast high to meet him, the concussion of the following horns against the boarding below nearly sends the lad backward upon them. One moment's eloquent silence, then the pent up relief and enthusiasm break forth simultaneously, and as the gates close behind the injured horseman on his way to the hospital, a deafening shout re-echoes round the building: "Viva! Bravo, chulo!" Voices alone are not held to be sufficiently expressive; *majas*, for there is no dearth of women there, wave fans and handkerchiefs, and the men call feet and hands to aid them in giving force to the demonstration of frantic applause. It is the outcome, not alone of relief at the fortunate escape of the horseman, but of sheer admiration of the pluck and agility shown by his daring comrade. The latter quite unused to any such demonstration of popular favour, yet

knowing how to estimate it at its just value—for there are few spectators more hypercritical than a Spanish crowd at a bull-fight—feels completely overwhelmed, and has only presence of mind enough to modestly pick up his tattered cloak, jump the barrier and hasten back to his place.

But from that moment his luck seemed to turn, his fate to be against him. Till now he had kept in the background, leaving to his comrades, rendered expert by training and experience, the actual business to be done. But now, elated by the applause his daring exploit had evoked for him, with every nerve tingling, his pulses beating at fever heat, Pedro lost his head completely, and half a dozen times, but for the gallantry of the other *chulos*, ever ready to risk their lives for a comrade's sake, he was within a hair's-breadth of death. Yet all their dash and daring could not stave off the hand of fate, could not prevent that which was certain to take place, sooner or later. If men, trained from boyhood to their profession, with every advantage that experience, agility and pluck can give them, with eye, foot and hand accustomed to take life in charge unflinchingly, yet atone at times for their daring with their lives, no fate save one could await a novice. . . . There is room for little heart or sympathy among the spectators at a bull-fight; yet it might be questioned if among those thousands of careless onlookers, there was one who would not have felt a pang of regret had they known that the motionless blood-stained figure carried out a few minutes later, was the shattered form of one who, in the very flower of his age, had laid down his life for the sake of his friend. But none knew or heeded, and the fight went raging on, while the youngest *chulo* lay dying in the hospital close at hand.

He lived long enough to receive the last rites, long enough to see and speak to his friend. Carlos had lost count of time and place by the bedside of Ines, and the hasty summons to the bull-ring, to see for the last time the friend who had given his life to serve him, came upon the young bull-fighter like a death-blow.

Pedro turned slightly towards him and held out his trembling hand, a gleam of gladness in the great dark eyes that were already shining with the strange light of death. "Ines," he whispered.

"She is better. They say she will live. But you! . . ." Carlos broke down here, and flinging himself on his knees, hid his face on his crossed arms on the bed. Bull-fighters have

hearts, as parents, wives and children can testify, though the statement may be one to which their upbringing and surroundings might seem to give the lie.

"That is good," Pedro said softly. "Why, man, never grieve for me. The cholera had taken all mine from me and your own were left. I was the one on whom the lot should fall."

They were the last words he spoke. The lamp, burning dimly, cast a faint light on the motionless form on the bed, its gorgeous dress stained with the wearer's life-blood, and on the bowed figure of Carlos, still wearing the ragged clothes that had formed his disguise. Suddenly, from the Plaza close at hand, broke forth a deafening outburst of excitement, increasing in volume till it reached a thunderous roar. It came to the ears of the dying lad; his dim eyes opened and sought questioningly those of his friend.

"El Bravo is down," murmured Carlos. "Diaz has avenged you, lad."

But the other's eyes had gone in the direction of the priest, and the crucifix held before them was all that he seemed to heed.

The world is losing ground, they tell us, growing harder, harsher and colder every day. Self is the idol worshipped by all, and "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," would seem to be the watchword of these *fin de siècle* days. Yet it is not so very long ago since the cholera came to Spain. And while hundreds of incidents such as the one rescued by this simple story from oblivion can still take place, even in this nineteenth century, while we can keep our hand on the silver thread that runs through the blackest, meanest depths of human degradation, then the worst pessimist among us need never fear that the world will have grown too bad to live in.

F. B. FORESTER.

That Brooch Business.

By E. N. LEIGH FRY,

Author of "JANET DELILLE," etc., etc.

IT happened last year down at the Arbuthnots'. They had a house party, and I was staying there as well as Ella. To prevent mistakes I may as well mention I have no sort of right to allude to her by her Christian name—or, for the matter of that, ever shall have now—but it will save trouble if I call her Ella here—Miss St. Aubyn-Daventry is a mouthful.

She, that is Ella St. Aubyn-Daventry, is an independent orphan, and a very independent one I have heard said. Personally I do not see why she should not be. She has a way of looking you straight in the face and saying what she means; and when she does mean a thing, there is no mistake about it. Also, she has what I've heard a chap describe as "an inconvenient sense of humour." I've noticed we men frequently do find a sense of humour inconvenient in a woman; but I don't know if that's why some of us are always assuring them they have none. This man goes down with some women, and they think him almost as fine a fellow as he does himself—and that's a biggish order. But, Ella—well, I've seen her eyes dancing and twinkling when she looked at him as though she were feeling the joke of him through every bit of her. I heard her say once, "Regarded from different points of view, the human animal may be a comedy, a tragedy, or a farce."

It's only because she's such a regular good sort that she didn't think me a farce last year when—well, I hadn't meant to go into that, but I suppose I may as well now. Besides, I'm not ashamed of it. I asked her to marry me. She was awfully good and let me down as easily as she could. Of course, I hadn't a chance. I knew that all the time, but I thought I might have a try, just in case. It was confounded cheek, of course. Not that she put it like that. She thanked me for asking her, as if it were an honour, and said she thought I had been making a mistake

about my own feelings and would find that out very soon. Then, to make it all pleasant again, she chaffed me a bit about not knowing the prohibited degrees in the Prayer-book, and that a man may not marry his grandmother. Of course she meant being a year or two older than I am. But as I'd been studying that up, I proved to her both history and contemporary observation—I felt I expressed that awfully well—assured us that the happiest marriages were those in which the woman was the older of the two. And then I produced examples: the Brownings, and a lot more. I saw Ella's eyes were beginning to twinkle that way they have; but she was awfully good to me. She was quiet a minute and then she said it was true; age was nothing and love was everything. I said that was what I felt, and I went ahead again about how we had always been such friends, and I had respected her and liked her long before I fell in love with her, and so it was all on a firm foundation. I had been thinking it out beforehand, so I had lots ready to say; and I can always talk to Ella because, besides being so gone on her then, I like her awfully, and she understands what you want to say almost before you have said it. So I went on and said: didn't she know that French definition of friendship, love without wings? And I said I thought the best sort of love must be friendship with wings, for then it would be solid and stay—not like the cherubs in the pictures who, being limited to the wings, can't sit down for obvious reasons. Her eyes twinkled again, and she said, "Yes, but the wings mustn't be tacked on; they must grow." I said whatever her feelings were, at least she must believe I was over head and ears, fathoms deep, in love with her.

"Yes," she said, "Mr. Elliot"—I forgot to say my name is Geoffrey Elliot—"but I think if you make up your mind to swim like a man, you'll get to shore again."

And then she held out her hands to me suddenly and said:

"Oh, I hope a nice girl will be happy enough to marry you some day, because I feel you are such a nice boy, and I believe it will last."

I didn't fancy her calling me a boy, but I was glad she thought me nice, though it made me feel humble too. I said:

"Oh, Ella"—I called her Ella that once—"then marry me yourself. If you feel about me like that, it would be all right."

She shook her head very gravely.

"Ah, no," she said, "the only possible excuse for marriage is love."

I had one more try.

"But you give me friendship, and the wings might grow. By-and-by, I shall ask you again."

She didn't answer for a moment. I saw she was setting her teeth and screwing herself up to do something difficult.

"Mr. Elliot," she began, "you mustn't ask again, because it can never be any use. I am going to tell you, because I owe it to you, and because I know you are a true gentleman." She said that, did Ella. "I am going to tell you that I have grown the wings some time ago for somebody else."

I forgot about myself then, and only thought of Ella. I knew it was hurting her awfully to have to say this, and that she was making herself do it because she felt it was her duty to put me out of my misery altogether, and at once if she could. I wanted to help her down easy, only I didn't know how to set about it.

"Nobody knows," she went on, "and the wings must stay folded quite away out of sight—inside."

"Like a ladybird," I said idiotically, because I couldn't think of anything else to say. But it did well enough, for Ella laughed and so did I, and then we shook hands and promised to be friends.

This happened a year before the business at the Arbuthnots'; and on my word, I wasn't sure if I'd done what Ella recommended and swum ashore, till the other chap turned up. But when I found I didn't want to punch his head, of course I knew it was all right. And I just want to say that for real solid friendship, mine for Ella is as good as they make it.

Of course, all this has nothing to do with the diamonds, but I'll get on to them now.

It began one day in Mrs. Arbuthnot's boudoir. She was there, as well as Ella and I, and a curate chap, a sort of cousin of Mrs. Arbuthnot's, who comes to stay there, make himself generally useful and flirt with her. At least, when I suggested the flirting to Ella, she laughed and said: "Don't you think you ought to find a heavier word?" And she was about right, for Mrs. Arbuthnot is an impressive blonde and does most things in a solid, stodgy sort of way. However, she has the curate chap hanging round a goodish bit, and they sympathize with each other—mostly about the evil doings of other people. I think it

is Mrs. Arbuthnot's substitute for flirtation. As for the curate chap, he hangs round chiefly because he knows which side his bread is buttered ; at least, that's my notion.

Mrs. Arbuthnot does not approve of Ella ; above all things she's proper, and she doesn't think Ella is. It puzzled me why, till I heard her discussing it with another woman one day, and then I made out it was on account of one or two things Ella thinks—like what she told me about the only possible excuse for marriage. I heard Mrs. Arbuthnot say : " No girl should think of such things till she is married." It struck me it might be a bit too late to begin then ; but as they weren't speaking to me I held my tongue. And then she went on : " Such ideas in a girl are very indelicate." I wanted to get up and say things, but as they would not have done in the drawing-room, I had to go to the smoking-room and swear at large. But I know this, if ever I marry—and as I don't want to punch the other chap's head now, I suppose I may—I hope it will be a girl who thinks, like Ella, the only possible excuse for it is love.

Well, I must get on.

Mrs. Arbuthnot and Ella were both sewing. I wasn't doing anything in particular, and I fancy the curate chap was under the impression he was making himself agreeable. He came across to Ella and asked in an affable way what she was working at.

" It's a flannel petticoat," she said calmly, and held it out for him to look at.

" Oh," he said with a sort of jump, as if she'd offered him the seven deadly sins for inspection.

I suppose it was tact on Mrs. Arbuthnot's part to explain promptly :

" For the *poor*—the garment is for the *poor*."

He looked kind of relieved, and though I could not quite follow out the idea, I suppose he drew his line somewhere between the clothing of the classes and the masses, and felt that no impropriety could lurk about a charitable petticoat. He may have got acclimatized to them, too, at Dorcas meetings.

To set him completely at his ease, Mrs. Arbuthnot drew his attention to her work.

" I am embroidering a head-flannel for Laura Dudley's baby," she said. " You may remember I am one of the godmothers.

I have all but finished it now, so I shall be able to dispatch the parcel this afternoon."

Evidently a head-flannel (whatever it may be) is all right, for the curate even took up an end of the thing to look at. It was certainly flannel too, but Mrs. Arbuthnot had been fiddling at it with blue silk, while Ella was sewing away like mad with white cotton. And I think Ella's "inconvenient sense of humour" was bothering her. I saw her lips twitch once or twice in a queer way, and I began to think it would be just as well if I did not catch her eye—not that she gave me the chance.

"Well," Mrs. Arbuthnot said after a bit, "I have finished it. Decidedly pretty, too, I think. Look, Ella."

And with that Ella walked across to her and took the thing in her hand to examine. As she did so, she started, and I saw her eyes fixed on the brooch Mrs. Arbuthnot was wearing. Somehow I saw the curate noticed her too. In describing it afterwards, when everybody was talking about the business, I overheard him say: "Her eyes glittered as they fastened themselves on the jewel." I wish I'd wrung his confounded neck, and I don't know why I didn't. The brooch represented two hearts transfixed by an arrow, all thickly encrusted with diamonds. Ella looked at it, then she looked away, and then back again. The curate also mentioned that she did this "with a strange expression of greed." I wish I'd had him to myself for ten minutes in a saw-pit.

Ella gave the work back to Mrs. Arbuthnot and returned with her own to her work-basket, seemingly beginning to arrange its contents. Mrs. Arbuthnot folded up her "garment" and observed:

"The Duncombes are coming on Thursday, and so is Arthur Vibart."

Ella suddenly made a complete upset of her work-basket, and the curate and I went to help her gather up the contents. He wore an apprehensive expression, as though he were not quite sure if further "garments," and not "for the poor," might reveal themselves among the *débris*. He might just as well have left me to do the whole thing; but, of course, Ella has money, and if he disapproved of her, he wasn't above taking her subscriptions. I said he's a fair idea about which side his bread is buttered, and my notion is he likes butter on both sides when he can get it.

"Lady Duncombe is always an addition to a house-party," Mrs. Arbuthnot went on; "she is so well up in everything."

"Her assistance in getting up bazaars for charitable objects is invaluable," the curate remarked, banging his head on the piano as he crawled out from under it with a reel of cotton.

"And Mr. Vibart will be some one quite fresh," said Mrs. Arbuthnot. "He has been out of England three years now—in the Rocky Mountains or somewhere."

Then she murmured something about a letter to write and left the room.

Ella stayed a bit, but she didn't seem to have much to say. At last, she picked up her work-basket and went off too, and I went round to the stables. It wasn't likely I was going to stop there *tête-à-tête* with the curate chap.

It was that afternoon that Mrs. Arbuthnot missed her brooch. She said she must have stuck it in her pincushion when she unfastened it before changing her dress. But when, later in the day, she looked for it again neither she nor her maid could find it anywhere. It had absolutely disappeared.

She was very much put out about it, as it was a valuable brooch, and had been one of Arbuthnot's gifts to her when they were engaged. She came downstairs before dinner feeling, as she said, "upset;" and she had just finished relating the whole history of the brooch and its mysterious disappearance to the company generally, when the door opened and Ella walked in.

She looked awfully fetching. She wore some sort of white dress, with a cluster of scarlet flowers at her breast. And there was something about her—a sparkle in her eyes and a flush on her cheeks, I don't quite know what, only I had never seen her look just like that before. I didn't wonder when I heard one of the men say, "By Jove!" under his breath. The curate, of course, didn't; but something made me look at him, and I saw he was staring like a Gorgon at something on the left side of Ella's bodice. And Mrs. Arbuthnot stepped forward suddenly, exclaiming in a tone that was half relief and half reproach:

"You have got it! But you might have told me you had taken it."

And what she pointed at was two diamond hearts and an arrow in Ella's lace.

Of course, we all looked then, and I saw the flush on Ella's cheeks got a little deeper ; but all she said was :

"Taken what ?"

"My brooch," Mrs. Arbuthnot answered.

"This is not your brooch," Ella said ; "it is mine. I noticed you were wearing one like it to-day."

"I never saw you wear that before," said Mrs. Arbuthnot.

"Very likely not," replied Ella. "I never noticed yours until to-day."

"George gave it to me before we were married," said Mrs. Arbuthnot. "He bought it at Heywood and Herbert's. Where did you buy yours ?"

"I didn't buy it," said Ella. "It was—given to me."

I saw the curate was watching her—we all were, I believe, for the matter of that—but I saw on his face a sort of expression of pious thankfulness that she had had the grace, at least, to pause before she told that falsehood. Of course, remembering her "expression of greed," he couldn't doubt it was a falsehood. But he looked a degree puzzled too, for it seemed pretty brazen to appear in public, and at once, with an article she had annexed.

"It is very strange," Mrs. Arbuthnot said, "that there should be two exactly alike. Who gave you that ?"

Ella's manner was confused. It did look as though she couldn't at the moment hit on a name to give as that of the donor.

"How you catechize !" she said, with a nervous sort of laugh. "One might fancy you thought I had stolen it."

Her eyes fell on the curate as she spoke, and I suppose she realized that was exactly what some of them did think, for she said no more, but held up her head and sailed in to dinner beside the man to whom she had been allotted.

Nothing more was said on the subject in public ; but afterwards, in private and in companies of twos and threes, it was more than thoroughly threshed out. Everybody agreed it was queer, with the exception of Arbuthnot, who didn't want a scandal in the house and dismissed the whole thing as adjectived nonsense.

As for me, I candidly confess I couldn't make head or tail of it. I wanted to kick everybody, only it didn't seem that would do Ella much good, so I just made up my mind I'd stick by her to the last gasp.

Next day things were no less queer. Of course, the disappearance of Mrs. Arbuthnot's brooch had been mentioned to the servants, and any of them could see Ella was wearing one exactly similar. She had it on when she came down to breakfast next morning, and she wore it all day. It really seemed as though she could not separate herself from it. Then it came out that Mrs. Arbuthnot's maid had spoken to Ella's maid about it; and though the latter had been awfully riled at the tone of the other, she let out she had never seen her mistress wear the brooch before, and until yesterday did not even know she possessed it. Of course, Mrs. Arbuthnot's maid passed this on to Mrs. Arbuthnot; and she, finding that Arbuthnot declined to listen and sympathize, confided in the curate. I suppose it wasn't under seal of confession, for he told another lady in strict confidence; the obvious result being that before five o'clock tea every blessed soul in the house was convinced Ella St. Aubyn-Daventry was a thief. I admit "kleptomaniac" was the word most of them used; and one or two went so far as to say they could not *quite* credit it. Also some half-dozen of the men said they didn't care a hang if she had taken the brooch; women were always queer about diamonds, and then she was awfully pretty. But as I heard the Honourable Mrs. Braybrooke-French—the mother of the two plain girls who won't go off—comment darkly: "We all know what *men* are."

I tell you, I was jolly miserable, for it seemed I could do nothing but look on. As I said, kicking was no good, and when I gave my mind in the smoking-room it only made chaff: "Oh, you go on, young 'un; we know all about *you*!" and that sort of thing. I didn't care if they did know. When I was in love with Ella the year before, I wasn't ashamed of it, and I'm not now. But they all seemed to think it took away from the value of my backing her up.

And then I could not tell Ella herself that I believed in her. It seemed like insulting her to assume that anything of the sort was necessary. And I didn't know either how much she knew of all that was being said. She must have known a good deal, however, though she kept up an air of indifference and went about wearing the brooch all day long in the face of everybody. I had to admit there was a sort of nervous excitement about her which I had not noticed before the brooch business; but I thought that was no wonder.

"I never was so thoroughly upset about anything," I heard Mrs. Arbuthnot tell the curate; "never! I feel it is wrong to take no public notice. It ought to be made a police case. But in one's own house—such a scandal!"

The curate shook his head.

"It is very sad," he said, "and very bad. But perhaps one ought to have realized her want of moral principle from—other circumstances."

What he meant by "other circumstances" I don't know—perhaps the "garment." Anyway, I said "D——!" and banged out of the room. I ought to have reversed the order of proceedings, but I couldn't wait till I got into the smoking-room that time.

The Duncombes and Vibart arrived on the Thursday afternoon, and met the rest of us in the drawing-room before dinner. Ella was the last to come down, and again she was all in white, "like an innocent girl," I heard that cad of a curate mournfully mumbling. She hadn't a single ornament about her, except on the left side of her bodice, and there was the diamond brooch.

"You know the Duncombes," Mrs. Arbuthnot said, for she had to keep up an appearance of civility with the criminal—I suppose that is what she and the curate called Ella.

Ella shook hands with Sir James and Lady Duncombe.

"Let me introduce Mr. Vibart," Mrs. Arbuthnot went on.

"We have met before," Ella said, holding out her hand to Vibart.

And just for a moment I thought he wasn't going to take it. His eyes had fallen on the brooch, and a curious sort of expression came on his face—at least, it was more as if some sort of expression had been going to come and he had stopped it. I thought it odd, for he had scarcely had time to hear the story. The next moment he had taken Ella's hand and was answering her:

"Yes, but not for three years."

Dinner went off as usual, though perhaps it was extra lively on account of Lady Duncombe, a good-natured, chatty person, who knows her world to the backbone. When we joined the ladies in the drawing-room afterwards, Ella had been sitting on the sofa talking to her; but presently, she—I mean Ella—got up and I saw her pass out at the French window that stood open. About three minutes afterwards, Arthur Vibart, who was strolling round

the room, looking at the pictures, reached the window, and he, too, went out.

Now, I give you my word, when I did the same I was thinking of nothing on earth but a cigarette on the terrace. We were all apt to dribble out at that window these warm evenings in the dusk, and have solitary smokes or chats of twos or threes as the case might be; and interfering with any one was as far from my mind as sneaking and listening to what wasn't my business. I can say that on my honour.

I went down the steps of the terrace and strolled along to the far end, where I sat down on a bench just below the balustrade. I felt in my pocket for my cigarette case and got that all right, but when I went on to explore for lights, I found I had none. It was too much bother going back to the house, so I just sat still, thinking, maybe, Vibart might come along and I could borrow a light from him. I had been sitting there some time when I realized in a sleepy sort of way—it was a warm drowsy evening, and very soothing sitting out there in the half-dark—that some one was standing on the terrace above, leaning against the balustrade. I had just arrived at the conclusion it was Ella, when there was a crunch of footsteps beside her, and Vibart's voice said:

"After three years."

I suppose I ought to have coughed or spoken or done something; but at the moment there really didn't seem any special necessity for it, and by the time there was—or by the time I was awake enough to realize it—it would have been so awfully awkward for all of us, I simply had to lie low.

"Yes," Ella answered, in a careless sort of way, "and what have you been doing all the time?"

"Trying to forget you," he answered very promptly.

And I expect I ought to have bolted then.

"I should have thought that unnecessary," Ella said rather sarcastically, though, all the same, I knew that minute he was the other chap. Of course, I ought to have bolted, but I made quite sure they would see me if I got up.

"Should you?" he said. "After that day up the river?"

"When people can rush off out of England," Ella began, "without even—even bidding their friends good-bye——"

"Bidding their friends good-bye!" he broke in. "Sometimes their friends make a rush-off the only thing possible."

Then there was a pause, and I hoped they would go away, but he began again:

"You're wearing the brooch I sent you after you lost one that day. Ella, how could you let me believe what I did believe then, if all the time you were engaged?"

"Engaged!" she cried indignantly. "Who said I was engaged? and to whom? Am I, by chance, also married? Any information will be gratefully received. It seems I can't know much about myself."

I was not quite sure whether I was sorry for Vibart or envied him just then. Of course, I couldn't see Ella from where I sat, but I knew pretty well she'd got her neck straight up that way she has, and her head in the air, and her eyes flashing like anything. But, then I knew she wouldn't be so angry with him unless——.

"You weren't engaged!" he said. "Mrs. Braybrooke-French told me next day you were—to Sir Henry Bruton—for certain."

"And you believed her," Ella said sarcastically. "A man is an intelligent being! Didn't you know she wanted you for Fanny?"

My word! I thought, did she? For Fanny is the one with the tin-plated giggle that Mrs. Braybrooke-French and Mrs. Arbuthnot had been chucking at my head ever since I came down. I suppose that's not "indelicate," by the way. For you'll notice it's what they do—I mean the sort that are down on girls for thinking out things before they are married, and feeling about it like Ella.

"You were not engaged?" he said. "I never heard out there, and I thought you might be married. And when I came back, somehow—well, somehow I couldn't get your name out to ask about you. Then I came down here, and—and you're wearing the brooch. Weren't you even engaged then?"

"If you had particularly wanted to know, you might have come to ask," Ella said, pretty sharp.

And I don't mind saying here, I've always thought Vibart was a blazing idiot not to have done that. I'm very good friends with him now; but I've always thought, and I always will, that that time he was just a blazing idiot. If it had been me, it isn't anything an old cat like Mrs. Braybrooke-French said would have sent me bolting off to the Rockies without having it out with

Ella herself first. Besides, I know her better than to suppose she'd ever play that sort of game with a man.

"You might have come to ask," said Ella.

"You mean?" he said. "Do you mean, if I had asked you, you would——?"

"I suppose I do," Ella answered very softly.

And I felt an infernal cad to be sitting there listening. It seemed to matter such a lot more than when she was slating him.

"I—I sat and waited," Ella went on, "and you went away. You had said so much, and not—just enough, and——"

"You might have known," he said, "when I sent the brooch."

"Yes," she returned, as quick as lightning, "and *you* might have known when I didn't send it back. A woman could not accept a thing like that from a man, unless——"

"I suppose I was a fool," he said, and he seemed ashamed of himself, which I thought was just as well; "but I didn't think about that, and they say women stick to diamonds when they get the chance."

Ella laughed a little.

"That's what they seem to think here, anyhow," she said, "as I am supposed to have stolen your brooch."

"Stolen it?"

"Yes. I have never worn it since that one week when I—when I was—waiting for you. But when I heard the other day you were coming here, I—well, I thought I'd put it on. It was letting myself down, I know, but I thought—I have always wondered if, perhaps, there had been a mistake, and I—well, I thought I might find out. Perhaps, after all, I would not have gone on wearing it till you came if I hadn't been so angry with them all. I believe I have just been doing it in defiance. Mrs. Arbuthnot had one like it, though, oddly enough, I never noticed it till that very day I heard of you, and somehow it has disappeared. And every single soul in the house, except Geoffrey Elliot, believes I stole it."

I liked the freedom and energy with which Vibart expressed himself about the whole Arbuthnot party; I expect he picked it up in the Rockies.

"Come," he concluded, "let us go in and tell them now."

"Tell them what?" Ella asked.

"That I gave you the brooch three years ago, and I won't have such infernal nonsense talked about my promised wife."

"Have I promised?" Ella inquired very demurely. "I don't seem even to remember your asking me."

Well, I did bolt then. I went off like a rabbit, across the grass, round the house and in at the front door. I found out afterwards neither of them ever saw me, so I might just as well have done it first as last and saved myself from feeling such a sneaking cad.

I went straight to the drawing-room, for I didn't want to miss seeing all these idiots put to confusion when Vibart came in to give them his mind. But I must say he didn't hurry himself, and I got rather tired waiting for the *dénouement*—I think that's the expression. The last post arrived in the interval, but there was nothing for me. Mrs. Arbuthnot had two or three letters. I happened to glance at her as she was reading the last, and I wondered if there was anything wrong, she looked so uncommonly uncomfortable.

She had it in her hand still when the window was pushed open and Vibart came in with Ella. He walked straight up to Mrs. Arbuthnot in a sort of way that made every one in the room stop talking to see what was going to happen.

"I hear," he said, "that some ridiculous nonsense has been talked here about Miss St. Aubyn-Daventry, the lady whom I am going to marry——"

The newspapers would put "Sensation" here in brackets. Everybody looked at Ella. She was holding her head up and looking at no one in particular, which was perhaps why her eyes caught mine. I just let her see it was all right and I meant to go on sticking by her and him too. She blushed like anything and smiled back. And after that she didn't hold her head quite so stiff.

"I understand," Vibart was going on, "that some have even had the audacity to imply Miss St. Aubyn-Daventry stole the diamond brooch she is now wearing. I have the pleasure of telling these"—and he said "these" as if they were a new kind of vermin—"that I gave her that brooch myself three years ago, before I left England. And if you like," he said, addressing Mrs. Arbuthnot more particularly, "if you like to send to Heywood and Herbert, I've no doubt they will be able to tell

you, when they refer to their books, that they sold the brooch to me."

The curate chap was standing behind Mrs. Arbuthnot, and I heard him say to her in an aside that some of the others must have heard too:

"It might be well to make the inquiry. If there have been—er—passages between Miss Daventry and Mr. Vibart, we must remember his evidence is tainted. It would not be unnatural if he had—er—composed this statement to shield her."

Dash the fellow! Why didn't somebody wring his neck?

"Oh," Mrs. Arbuthnot said, looking more uncomfortable than before, "do be quiet! I—I—it isn't my brooch."

Lady Duncombe had been staring at Ella's bodice through a pair of long-handled glasses, but she put them down now and addressed Vibart.

"I don't think there is any necessity to send to Heywood and Herbert," she said placidly; "as it happens, I saw you buy that brooch. I was in the shop at the time, though you were too much absorbed to notice me. I made a note of it; for a brooch of that sort meant something special, and I watched for it all that season—for that and an announcement—without result. I don't think you need send to Heywood and Herbert."

On my word, I heard the curate at Mrs. Arbuthnot's back again.

"Even should this be true," he said, "where is your brooch? And why did she begin to wear this precisely when yours disappeared? Can it be she had lost that given to her by Mr. Vibart, and on hearing he was coming, took yours to replace it? Nothing can quite satisfactorily explain the circumstances but the discovery of *your* brooch."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Arbuthnot, in an agitated way; "I know. Do stop talking nonsense! Read that."

And she pushed the letter she held in her hand into mine. Why she gave it to me, I haven't a notion. I expect she was too confused at the moment to know who I was. However, I took it, and directly I had run my eyes over it, I stood up in the middle of the room, cleared my throat, and read it out as if I had been presenting an address or moving a vote of thanks.

"MY DEAREST GWEN,

"Your charming and almost too handsome present to darling baby arrived quite safely, although, you dear reckless thing, you had not registered the precious parcel. When I opened it, of course the lovely head-flannel—your *own* work, too, dear—came first to view. How good of you to make it. It suits darling baby sweetly. And then, in unfolding it, out came your cunning surprise—the present. What a godmother you are to send such an exquisite, costly brooch. Such a sweet idea, too, the hearts with an arrow, and, oh, those *lovely, lovely* diamonds. My darling little Gwendolen must always keep and prize this precious gift from her dear, generous godmother. So many, many thanks, dear, from

"Your loving friend,

"LAURA DUDLEY."

That letter made the whole thing as clear as daylight to four of us: Mrs. Arbuthnot, Ella, the curate, and myself. But, as the others looked a bit puzzled, I did some Greek chorus business, and explained how Mrs. Arbuthnot had been wearing the brooch when she finished the baby's flannel concern, and no doubt the ornament had been unfastened and dropped out into her work. Whereupon she must have rolled the one up inside the other and dispatched both to Mrs. Dudley. As to taking the brooch out of her dress and sticking it in the pincushion, she must have imagined that, as any one easily can of a thing they're in the habit of doing.

When I had finished, for the life of me I couldn't help turning to Mrs. Arbuthnot with a grin, and remarking:

"I'm afraid, after all, you *have* lost the brooch."

For I knew, after that letter, she wouldn't have the face to ask for it back again; and I thought it served her jolly well right for the way she had been letting people spatter Ella's good name. I only wished the curate had lost something too. But he has in a way; for Mrs. Arbuthnot is so ashamed of the business, and her and his share in it, that she puts it all on him and won't ask him near the place. She does her flirtations now with a chap on the comic papers; and as he is pretty stodgy too, he suits her down to the ground.

As for the rest, of course they all told Ella they'd never

believed a word of it, and congratulated her and Vibart effusively. I saw her "inconvenient sense of humour" nearly getting the better of her once or twice, but Vibart looked more like breaking some of their heads. He came and shook hands with me afterwards, and said something about how I had stuck by Ella. But, of course, I would do that.

And, as I explained, I don't say Ella in real life she being Mrs. Arthur Vibart. I am going down to stay with them this autumn.

Marie Mancini.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

By ROSA NIEDERHAUSER.

PLAIN women in fiction are ignored or forsaken ; in reality they occasionally conquer many hearts and cause great stir. Marie Mancini was exceptionally plain. They nicknamed her "the Blackamoor." Sallow, lean and lanky, there was no end to her arms and neck, her mouth was wide and flat, her black eyes were hard, her whole person lacked charm, and her mind matched the rest. She was one of the ten nieces and nephews imported into France by Cardinal Mazarin. The wily prime minister of Louis XIII., after that monarch's death, shared the power with Queen Anne of Austria, whom he had completely bewitched. Handsome, intelligent, keen-witted, he possessed all the qualities and charms of the Italian race, but also its faults. He attracted irresistibly, yet he was despicable and despised, but forgot insults and benefits alike, provided he could satisfy his greed for gold. The first contingent of his young relatives reached France on September the 11th, 1647, on the eve of the civil wars of the Fronde. They were three girls and a boy, fetched from Rome by one duchess, placed under the care of another, and educated with Queen Anne's own children. They bore obscure names—Mancini and Martinozzi—but Mazarin was their uncle. With the exception of Marie they were a strikingly handsome family, and all played conspicuous rôles. The girls were highly cultured, artistic, and transcendently fascinating. No French *grande dame* could rival a Mancini in the art of dressing, conversing and receiving, or combine so much dignity and grace when occasion demanded it. Bold and venturesome, these Italian sirens never aspired to heroism. They were adventuresses, who knew neither shame nor downheartedness. They looked upon every defeat as a mislucked trick and began afresh. Life, they pretended, was a game of hazard at which fools alone did not cheat, and whose stakes were pleasures, especially forbidden pleasures, most savoury of all.

Marie Mancini differed from the rest of her family in looks only. Amongst her lovely sisters she resembled a savage, bristling animal, always ready to bite. Her mother's dying wish was to have her cloistered, to avoid the calamities which, according to her father's prophecy, she was to bring about. Mazarin, though not free from superstition, disbelieved his brother-in-law and kept Marie at court, where she made good use of her time. She read, studied, and polished her mind in the refined society she frequented. She was eighteen or nineteen when Louis XIV. fell seriously ill and was at death's door. Marie's ardent southern nature disdained etiquette and conventionality. She was fond of the young king, and not ashamed of betraying her passion, alarmed the whole court by her heartrending sobs. At his unexpected recovery every one told him of Marie's extraordinary grief. He was not then the *grand monarque*, adulated like a divinity, but a mere youth, who blushed and paled easily, and trembled when a pretty damsel pressed his hand. The thought of having excited a grand passion flattered him exceedingly. He looked at Marie Mancini more carefully and found she had vastly improved. Indeed, there was something about her personality that enveloped, inflamed and devoured those that came too near. Louis talked to her, and the passionate accents of her thrilling voice carried him away like a straw in a storm. His calf love soon ripened into a deeper, stronger feeling. Majestic and graceful, clever in all manner of bodily exercises, Mazarin, intentionally, had kept him profoundly ignorant. Nor did he belong to those who guess and assimilate. His thoughts needed stimulating, and though already possessing the germs of the qualities which made him a great king, these, so far, had lacked air and light. Marie Mancini became his friend and adviser. She revealed to him noble and tender feelings and all that makes life worth living. She blamed his ignorance and encouraged him to seek the society of cultured, superior men. She instilled into him nobler ambitions than the choice of his costumes or the mastering of a new minuet step. She reminded him that he was a king and incited him to become a great king. Louis XIV. never forgot that lesson. Tenderness, gratitude, admiration and submissiveness, the trust of the pupil towards his master, combined with that special attraction exercised by the southern woman upon the man of the north, fairly promised

to become real and lasting love. With the cleverness characteristic of her race and family, Marie adroitly fanned the king's flame. She rendered herself indispensable. At the palace she was his shadow, whilst he had eyes for her alone. If the court travelled, Marie left the coach and crossed hills and dales on horseback, her troubadour by her side. For them there was neither winter nor summer, rain, wind nor cold. They were together, that was enough; it was everything. Mistress of the king's heart and mind, it was natural that the ambitious Italian should want to share his throne. Only, to gain her object she must have persuaded her uncle that his power would always remain what it then was, unlimited. Unfortunately for her cause, Marie was too impetuous and passionate to be diplomatic. What she had set her mind to, must happen at all costs—she knew no obstacles! So far, however, her conduct towards her uncle had given him no grounds for suspecting her submissiveness; and as long as his own interests did not suffer, he was quite agreeable to receive Louis XIV. into his family! One other person, however, generally tractable enough in his deft hands, threatened to prevent such an alliance—the king's mother, the proud Anne of Austria. Whenever he hinted at this possibility she suddenly drew herself up and treated her favourite and prime minister like the lowest of menials. To avert her suspicions, the crafty Italian suggested another bride, Margaret of Savoy, and negotiations to that effect were forthwith begun. If the match came off, the future Queen of France was a cousin of his niece Olympia, therefore still in the family. Marie was alarmed, but her spirits rose with the danger. An interview between the bride and bridegroom elect and their respective mammas was to take place at Lyons. Mdle. Mancini was of the party, riding, as usual, beside her royal lover nearly all the distance from Paris to Lyons. In the evening, like all lovers, they needed several hours to exchange their confidences. At Lyons, however, she was left at home, whilst the king, his mother and their suite went to meet Margaret and her party on the road.

"The princess," relates an eye-witness, "appeared in all her hopeless ugliness, which offended all eyes except those most interested—the young king's. Away from Marie's fascination, the passionate lover was suddenly a modest young man easily

pleased with his *fiancé* because he was very desirous to get married. He mounted into her coach and the two chatted quite familiarly as if they had known each other all their lives. Marie had been impatiently watching for the return of the coaches. She was not delighted by what she learnt of the interview, but her mind was promptly made up. Resigned and tearful she was lost. She was bold and jealous, made a violent scene that very night, accusing the king of fickleness, taunting him with his ridiculous choice of a hunchback, storming, pleading, mocking. Next day the Savoy bride was so completely ignored that the match was forthwith broken off and Marie and Louis resumed their idyl.

During the ensuing months they were scarcely an hour separated from morning till night. The court was the scene of perpetual *fêtes*, to which only young and loving couples were invited. Sailing with the wind, the young courtiers surrounded their future queen with honours. Mazarin, in a long interview with his niece, gathered that with his aid the crown was within her reach. Evidently his course was clear; one serious obstacle only was in the way—the dowager queen's hostility. He resolved to speak plainly of the impending marriage, trusting to his influence over her to get her consent. He was mistaken. Instead of falling in with his views, she informed him that she could not believe the king, her son, capable of such disgraceful weakness; but if he should think of it, all France would rise against him and the cardinal, and she herself would head the rebellion. Mazarin dissembled his wrath at these insulting words, intending to make her smart for them later on, and pretended to share her views. All the while he still meant to support Marie's pretensions, but she misinterpreted his diplomacy, and, believing herself abandoned, resolved to play her game single-handed. She began to ridicule her uncle on every possible occasion—to the young king's great delight—and Mazarin soon wondered whether the day of his niece's coronation might not be that of his own disgrace. Between the sacrifice of Marie's interests and his own the prime minister had not a minute's hesitation. To the queen's joyful surprise he suddenly turned round completely and voted for a Spanish marriage, upon which she had long set her heart.

Marie Mancini was not easily daunted. Too impetuous for intriguing, she meant to win by insolence. She defied the queen

to her face, followed Louis about more than ever, even into his mother's apartments, acquainted him with all the evil reports current about her, and actually succeeded in rendering undutiful this most respectful of sons! Her complete mastery over him almost leads one to suppose that she understood the modern science of suggestion. Yet it has been remarked that Louis XIV. was too selfish ever to have truly loved, and that Marie's heart, if she possessed one, was lodged in her head. Whether their love was genuine or not, they believed in it for a whole year, and declared themselves ready to die for it! But Mazarin's steady diplomacy proved stronger than that love. Whilst they daily renewed eternal vows, the Spanish match was quietly being settled, and when all was ready Mdle. Mancini received orders to retire to the Castle of Brouage, near La Rochelle. The king, closeted with his mother, heard the news calmly enough, though he shed some tears. Only when he witnessed Marie's sombre despair, her bitter grief and reproaches, did he also grow desperate. Hastening to the queen and cardinal he declared that he would not, could not give her up, and on his knees begged their consent to his marriage. Mazarin, however, solemnly declared that rather than allow it he would stab his niece with his own hand. The king shed more tears and renewed his promises to Marie whilst accompanying her to her travelling coach. Her well-chosen parting words have often been quoted. "Sire," she said, "you are king and you love me, yet you suffer my departure." Marie's fierce despair even moved the cardinal, who with all his faults was not a hard man. "She suffers more than I can tell you," he wrote to the queen, and her own memoirs, written years after, confirm the statement. Still hoping, she tried a ruse. When her uncle visited her she pretended resignation to her fate and requested only to be allowed to correspond with her royal adorer. The permission was granted, and shoals of letters were exchanged. Louis XIV. was accused of wasting more time in writing to her than formerly in conversing. At the same time Marie addressed the most loving missives to her uncle, who gave her plainly to understand that he knew what to make of her sentiments. The crafty Italian was not the man to be taken in by a mere girl! To Louis XIV. he wrote that only mad infatuation could blind him, and wound up a most unflattering portrait of his niece by intimating that should the king persist in his

foolish and wicked plan, Mazarin meant to resign office and retire to Italy. The reply to his eighteen pages was short but significant. He might please himself about going away, as plenty of others would willingly take his post. Mazarin must have regretted his soft-heartedness in allowing the lovers to correspond! The court watched events with the greatest excitement, divided between horror of such an alliance and joy at the anticipated dismissal of the hated cardinal. The country echoed those feelings; Europe laughed, with the exception of Spain, which of course felt insulted on behalf of the Infanta. Frightened by the king's attitude, Mazarin again changed his tactics. He assured Louis XIV. that his wishes were law to him, and that he never dreamt of questioning anything he might find it his pleasure to do. Marie's chance was not lost after all, had she not suddenly surprised the world by a veritable *coup de théâtre*.

Believing the Spanish match a foregone conclusion, she resolved to retire gracefully by informing her uncle that she gave up all idea of becoming Queen of France. Having taken the decisive step, Marie felt relieved, and soon discovered that the undying passion so reluctantly renounced, had already burnt itself out. The overjoyed Mazarin expressed his satisfaction in letters overflowing with admiration and tender solicitude for his charming niece, and, still better, trebled her pension, which of late had been far from liberal. He saw her supplied with plenty of amusements and luxuries, including a sumptuous table, to which he was himself very partial. He also promised to find her a suitable *parti*, and, meanwhile, advised her to seek strength and consolation in Seneca. Marie Mancini needed no such anodynes. Her lonely heart did not long remain untenanted. All the stormy passion bestowed upon the king was forthwith transferred to Prince Charles of Lorraine. She took heaven and earth to witness that she would be married to him or become a nun!

Louis XIV., deeply hurt at her sudden renunciation of him, married the Infanta Maria Theresa on June 6th, 1660, six months after he and Marie had vowed eternal fidelity. On his return journey from Spain he piously visited Brouage, where she had suffered so much for love of him. On reaching Fontainebleau he heard that she, whom he still believed dissolved in tears, was devoured by a second burning passion. The most ordinary mortal resents being replaced; how much more a king, and most

of all the grand monarch. No wonder that, when Marie at her uncle's command went to make her courtesy to the new queen, her reception was decidedly cold!

In a private conversation Louis XIV. had even the cruelty to extol the virtues and charms of his young consort. "After that," remarks Marie in her memoirs, "I resolved to cease my complaints and to stifle all feeling." Things were going wrong with her now. Mazarin, since the king's marriage, had forgotten all his fine promises and refused his consent to her union with Charles of Lorraine, who soon took his love elsewhere, so that she was now bemoaning the loss of two suitors at once. The following year her uncle died, after having previously distributed his enormous wealth amongst his family, who are said to have shown their sorrow by exclaiming: "At last he is gone!"

Soon after Louis XIV. ordered Mdle. Mancini to marry Connétable Colonna, a hitherto disdained admirer, and as he was settled in Italy she was sent to join him, being thus literally expelled from France! She relates that she managed to conceal her wounded pride until the first night after leaving Paris, when she completely broke down.

Mdme. Colonna did not fancy her husband, but bewitched, like all her admirers, he put up with her sulks, provided fairylike entertainments, spoilt, petted her and studied all her whims until he won her good graces, quite suddenly, just when he was beginning to despair.

The first few years of their married life resembled the ending of a fairy tale. They lived happily and had many children, with this difference only, that at the fifth child Madame la Connétable declared herself tired of family joys and began an adventurous and nomadic career. Unable to tire by her pranks the inexhaustible indulgence of an infatuated husband, she resolved upon flight. One fine morning she and her sister Hortense, likewise weary of conjugal fetters, drove out of Rome concealing manly apparel under their ordinary dress. At Civita Vecchia they dismissed their carriages and waited twenty-four hours, hiding in a wood without food or covering, for the boat they had ordered. At last it came, but the crew, suspecting an escapade, extorted enormous sums from the ladies, threatening to upset the *felucca* if their demands were not immediately satisfied. After running untold risks from tempests and pirates, and constantly expecting

to be overtaken by their husbands, they reached Marseilles, where they had only rested one hour at a miserable inn, when, to escape the much-dreaded pursuit, they had to "move on." They roamed about the south of France for a considerable time, deprived of the most essential necessities, reduced to begging.

Hortense grew tired of their hardships and returned to her husband, the Duke of Mazarin, whilst Marie pursued her journey to Paris, determined to see the king once more, perhaps—who knows?—to add a sequel to her romance. The Parisians, ever eager for excitement, curiously awaited her advent. How would Louis XIV. receive his old flame? He made it a practice to show gratitude to the women who had loved him, but etiquette and decorum ruled his court now, and Marie, always unconventional, had become a regular Bohemian. Besides, she had so soon consoled herself, and many of his courtiers still remembered his red eyes when Mazarin refused to let him marry his niece. To her letter soliciting the favour of settling in Paris he coldly answered that on the contrary he advised her to retire into a convent to stop the gossip started by her flight from Rome. Nevertheless she drove posthaste to Fontainebleau, where one of Louis XIV.'s chamberlains found her in a humble tavern. He informed her that unless she wished to enter a convent at Grenoble it was the king's desire she should immediately leave the country. She tartly replied that she had not quitted her home to return to it so soon. Her reasons for coming away were of a private nature and could be revealed to his Majesty alone, whose directions she would now await, seeing that she had no mind to go to a nunnery, either at Grenoble or elsewhere. Then anticipating a lecture from the courtier, she took up a guitar and played several airs ere her baffled visitor left her. She was quite capable, in spite of strict orders, to take the king unawares. To avoid such a scandal, another message, still more peremptory, consigned her to a convent at Reims. She offered to go if only the favour was granted to her of seeing his Majesty once more face to face! But times were changed, for Mdme. Colonna went to Reims without having been admitted into the king's presence. "I was disappointed in my expectations," she wrote, "and the king, from whom I hoped everything, treated me very coldly, for reasons still unknown."

At Reims she seems to have taken a fancy to convent life; at

all events, she visited many in various countries, turning up as a rule where she was least expected. In January, 1680, she appears at Madrid, where she claims the protection of the French ambassador, M. de Villars, against her still doting husband. She has not given up her hope of fascinating anew her royal lover, upon whom Madame de Maintenon now keeps a watchful eye! So far from being admitted at court Madame Colonna is forbidden to cross the French frontiers. Her irrelevant conduct at the convents made her anything but a welcome guest. She disturbed the nuns' devotions by chasing dogs round the dormitories, put ink in the holy water basin, occasionally bribed the nun who attended the turning box and, accompanied by a maid, took a nocturnal walk on the Prado, conspicuously attired. In the daytime she received her various admirers in the parlour, including her husband, who continued to implore her to return to him. Contrary to most women she had grown good-looking with advancing years. Her complexion had cleared up, her figure filled out, her brilliant eyes become soft and appealing, hair and teeth were well preserved.

Weary of roaming she bursts in upon her husband one fine morning. He, overjoyed to get her back, intimates his intention of keeping his linnet caged now. Such is not Madame Colonna's idea, however. Terrible scenes ensue, which set all Madrid talking. The king, queen, their ministers, and even the grand inquisitor interfere. At his wits' end, the Connétable orders her formal arrest by men-at-arms, who unceremoniously drag her to prison by the hair and half naked. He now promises to enter the Holy Order of the Knights of Malta on condition that she shall become a nun. And, behold, on a certain Saturday morning she takes the veil of a novice in a convent of Madrid. The costume is becoming, the nunnery comfortable and not strict. Besides, Madame Colonna is a woman of resources. Underneath her garb she wears brocaded skirts, and no sooner out of sight than she throws off the first, dresses her hair *à l'espagnole*, with a high comb and coloured ribbons, and parades about for her own gratification. Impossible for any one to believe in her vocation. Her husband himself sees the folly of his suggestion, and at last leaves her for good and all! Small blame to him, though it would have been more magnanimous to provide for her than to leave her to poverty in a garret without fire—in

need of everything. Probably he regretted his cruelty, for at his death, in 1688, he not alone left her his fortune, but asked her forgiveness, and to exonerate her in the eyes of her children, took upon himself the blame of her erratic conduct.

Once more she led a joyous existence, her coquetry increasing with years. In 1705 she appeared in France for the last time, still intending to see the king, but always prevented. For several months she was not allowed to advance further than Provence; finally, her banishment was limited to Paris. She came even to Passy, but found that she had grown estranged from the society she once loved. Her former friends neglected her, and her own family had dispersed or died.

Finally Madame Colonna disappeared from the scene and plunged into the darkness of oblivion. The date of her death is uncertain, but she is supposed to have lived till 1715. She had become more and more absorbed in occult science, cultivated by most members of her strange family. One pictures her old, wizened and dishevelled, her eyes alone still sparkling. She shuffles the cards, trying to read the future. Alas, there is no future for her now! But there is the past to remember, the brilliant past when she stood on the verge of becoming Queen of France!

This Transitory Life.

By THOROLD DICKSON and M. PECHELL.

CHAPTER VII.

"A heritage of woe."

ONCE more in the Eternal City.

Throughout the railway journey from Brindisi to Rome, the image of Margaret Trent had haunted Straight's mind ; he had tried reading, but soon gave up the effort ; her face seemed to come between him and the print. Was ever man so unfortunate as he ? He had met the one woman he could love on this earth, but it was too late. A great gulf lay between them.

Then he fell to picturing what his life might have been with Margaret as his wife : the admiration she would cause, the way in which she would help him in his career.

The carriage stopped before the house in the Via Condotti, and Douglas ran upstairs and vented his feelings in a ring which nearly pulled the bell-wires down.

The door was opened by Francesca, Alice's maid, who laid her finger on her lips.

"Would the signor go gently, the signora had one of her bad headaches."

Straight was not in a frame of mind, however, to listen to anything. He pushed past the girl into his wife's room. She was lying apparently insensible on the bed. Douglas looked at her and then went closer and shook her ; a peculiar smell was perceptible ; he shook her again more roughly and something rolled from the bed and fell with a crash on the floor. It was a liqueur bottle.

Leaving his wife, Straight went into the *salon* and, sitting down, reflected long and deeply. Then he wrote a note to an old friend of his, a doctor, who lived in Rome, though he had long given up practice.

"What can I do for you, my boy?" said Dr. Ellis, when he arrived an hour later.

Having known Douglas from his birth he could never quite realize the fact that he had reached man's estate.

"Fact is, I'm in trouble—about my wife."

"Ah!" and in that one syllable the doctor expressed volumes.

"You're the oldest friend I've got, so I asked you to come. I daresay you know that it hasn't been quite plain sailing between Alice and me since we've been here."

"I have noticed it. Sorry—very sorry. I've often called round since you have been away to have a look at your wife, but she has always been too unwell to see me. Is she ill to-day?" he added, with a quick glance at Straight.

"That is just what I want to consult you about. Come and see," and he took the doctor into Alice's room.

One glance at the prostrate form on the bed and the broken bottle on the floor and the old man shook his head.

"Douglas, I am very sorry for you; a sad case, a very sad case. I have suspected it for some weeks. You ought not to have left her alone, exposed to temptation."

"How on earth was I to know that she had any leanings that way? D——n it," he exclaimed with a sudden burst of anger. 'It was an evil day when I first saw her pretty, silly face. She has been a curse to me ever since.'

"Gently, my boy. You should have more pity for the poor girl. Remember she is your wife."

"Yes, she *is* my wife," said Straight bitterly, for he thought of Margaret.

"By all accounts," continued the doctor, "you have not made her life here the happiest. It has become quite a saying that you two are never seen together."

"Hang it all! what can a fellow do? She hates the life here, and won't try to get on with the people. Isn't that hard enough for a man in my position? And now to find out that she drinks! I shall have to chuck the Foreign Office."

"Don't do anything hastily. You musn't be despairing. We must hope for the best. If it isn't hereditary there is always hope. By the way, do you know much about her people?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing. She was living alone with an

idiotic old mother when I met her, and she once mentioned a brother, about whom there appears to be some mystery."

"Well, take my advice: leave Rome as soon as possible. Go to England; let your wife have a thorough change of air and surroundings. I'll send you something to give her, and when you are in London you might consult Sir Edward Nettleby. He makes these cases his speciality. Good-bye, and don't forget one thing—be kind to her."

CHAPTER VIII.

"It biteth like a serpent."

Prov. xxiii. 32.

"DIPLOMATIC society doesn't seem to have improved your wife much. Lost her looks, too," remarked Valencia Straight, looking after Alice's retreating form.

Douglas and his sister were sitting under the trees at Harborough House. It was September, and he and his wife had been in England for some months.

"I don't understand her either," continued Valencia; "she doesn't seem to take the least interest in anything. I've tried her on all sorts of subjects, but it's impossible to get her to rise to any of them. Everybody ought to have a hobby of some sort. By the way, I don't like that new gun of mine. You can have it for a song. Why don't you teach Alice to shoot?"

Valencia was a keen sportswoman.

Straight muttered something unintelligible and followed his wife into the house.

Alice seemed in a great measure to have checked her unfortunate failing since they had been in England, and her husband began to think that she was on the high road to recovery, though it must be owned that he did not take very active steps to prevent opportunities of her indulging. During the last few days she had appeared nervous and out of sorts.

Straight opened his wife's door gently and went in. She was standing with her back to him taking something out of her dressing case. He came up and snatched the object from her hands. It was a long cut-glass smelling bottle.

"Give me my scent bottle," exclaimed Alice, trying to take it

from him ; but he held it high above her head while he unscrewed the silver stopper. It was full of brandy.

A feeling of utter loathing and disgust came over him.

"How long have you gone on in this way," he asked, "hiding spirits in your dressing case?"

"Oh! Douglas, please don't hate me. I can't help it." And sitting down on the ground she sobbed bitterly. "I try, indeed I do, oh, so hard ; but you are so cold and indifferent to me, and when you say something unkind I feel I must take something ; it helps me to forget."

"Well, you had better go back to your mother. You are not fit to be in society."

"Please don't send me away. I shall die if you do." And she clasped her hands about him. "Take me to a doctor ; he will give me something to take the craving away. Oh, I *will* conquer it if you will only give me one more chance. For God's sake, be kind to me, Douglas ! If you send me away I shall kill myself."

The next day Straight took his wife up to town to see Sir Edward Nettleby.

The exact views of that celebrated physician upon the case were involved in some obscurity.

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Straight, that your wife's case is a sad one, a *very* sad one. But mind, I do not say hopeless. While there is life there is hope," and the great man uttered this axiom, with which men of his profession deceive us, buoying us up with false hopes, as if it had been the latest discovery of science.

"Mrs. Straight confided to me," he continued, "that alcoholism is unfortunately hereditary in her family ; her only brother has been in an establishment for dipsomaniacs for years."

"What on earth am I to do?" exclaimed Douglas. "I can't take her back to Rome with me, and I am due there next week."

"Your wife is also, I am sorry to tell you, in a very delicate state of health ; I have found on examination deep-seated organic mischief, which eventually must prove fatal ; however, with proper care she will, I hope, live for many years. She is so deeply attached to you, that although in these cases I generally recommend special treatment in an establishment, yet I feel a forced separation would bring about serious results—I may say *most* serious. Take your wife with you to Rome ; on no account

leave her behind. I have prescribed a course of treatment which I hope will be successful. I have also recommended a companion to Mrs. Straight: a most charming lady, who has had great experience in these cases; and as long as she touches no alcohol——"

"But if she should manage to get hold of any?"

"My dear Mr. Straight, do not let us anticipate evil; still, in answer to your question, I feel it my duty to warn you that any prolonged relapse in alcoholism on the part of your wife would be attended with serious results—I may say *most* serious."

"Which being interpreted," said Douglas to himself, "means that unless Alice is forcibly kept from liquor she will drink herself to death," and he pondered on the doctor's sayings.

So it was arranged that Alice should return to Rome with her husband, accompanied by Miss Webb, a lady of uncertain age and aggressive views upon "Justification by Faith."

The evening before they started, Straight, at his wife's request, took her to see "A Woman's Scorn," at the Corsican; it reminded her of old times, she said.

The house was nearly empty, people being out of town, and Douglas, who was not a little bored—he hated melodrama—buried himself in a newspaper.

During the first interval there was a stir amongst the audience, and glasses were directed to the box exactly opposite theirs.

"I wonder who that is," said Alice. "What magnificent diamonds. Do look!"

Straight put down his paper and looked. The tall figure taking off her cloak seemed familiar, and when she turned round a thrill went through him, and he uttered an exclamation of delight as he recognized Margaret Trent.

CHAPTER IX.

"Of all the paths that lead to a woman's love, pity's the straightest."

The Knight of Malta.

"KISMET," remarked Straight, throwing down the *Morning Post*.

Alice picked it up, and looking down the court and society news, read: "We understand that Mr. J. Primrose Trent, the

Australian millionaire, and Mrs. J. Primrose Trent have left London for Paris, *en route* for Rome, where they intend passing the season."

"Those people we saw at the theatre just before we left England?" she said.

"Yes, my dear; and I request you will call upon them as soon as they arrive."

Something in Straight's tone made Alice look up quickly, it seemed to convey a covert sneer, but he was intent on rolling a cigarette.

"I have heard that Mrs. Trent is a singularly beautiful and accomplished woman," put in Miss Webb discreetly.

"Singularly enough your information coincides with what I have heard," replied Straight, and his cigarette being finished, he rose, lighted it, and left the room.

Alice looked after him for a minute, her lips trembling and her eyes full of tears.

"Miss Webb," she exclaimed at last, "my life is miserable; it's no good trying any more. Douglas hates me, and I am only a burden to him. He loves that woman. Oh, yes; he thinks I am blind and stupid and don't see it. But I do. I know he met her in India, and he is always looking at her photo, and he wrote to her after we saw them in London. And now she is coming here. I wish I was dead."

"Don't upset yourself, dear Mrs. Straight. We know that man's heart is desperately wicked, and we are told to set our affections upon nothing on this earth. A little sal volatile will do you good. You must not make yourself ill."

"Ill! I wish I was dying! Perhaps then Douglas would be kind to me, when he knew he was going to be free."

"My dear, I wish I could see you in a different frame of mind. Providence sends trials to convert us. I will read you a passage from 'Warnings to the Unregenerate.'"

"I don't want to be converted. I want Douglas to love me again. Oh, you don't know what it is to lose your husband's love. You have never been married."

And Miss Webb thanked a benevolent Providence that had withheld from her the snare of beauty, and had further endowed her with strength of mind to refuse the only offer she had ever had. Said offer being made by an aged invalid, whose gout she

had nursed, and who consoled himself a week later by marrying his cook.

Meanwhile Straight strolled idly along the streets and reasoned within himself. "Fate! It is too strong for me; why struggle against it? After all, Moncrieff was right; to every man it is given to attain his desires: why should a woman ruin one's whole life? Alice has ruined mine; had she been different—but what's the good of speculating? she will drink to the end of the chapter. That old woman says that when the craving comes on she can hardly keep her from it, and yet our beneficent and Christian laws bind me to the poor wretch, to love, honour and cherish her as long as life lasts."

Just then a party of German students, who had been refreshing themselves in a wine shop, came out arm-in-arm, joyously shouting, "*Freut euch des Lebens.*"

"After all," thought Straight, "the Epicureans were right—'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'"

In a week's time the Trents arrived and took up their abode in a luxurious flat in the Via Nazionale. The Straights were their first visitors. Douglas exerted himself in a most unusual way to do the honours of the city, and to get up expeditions, pic-nics, &c., for Margaret's amusement. John Trent was pleased to see his wife interested and entertained; he himself was much occupied in some mysterious business connected with wool and tinned mutton.

In spite of Miss Webb's vigilance, poor Alice had frequent relapses, for in some inexplicable way she seemed to manage to obtain liquor, and had even been known to have recourse to eau-de-Cologne when other supplies were cut off.

The state of things gradually came to be understood in society, and Douglas was very much pitied.

"Mrs. Straight does not care about going out," said Mrs. Trent one day, as she and Douglas were standing side by side on the Palatine. She said it in all good faith, as the real cause of Alice's frequent indisposition had not reached her ears.

Straight gave her a look.

"Mrs. Trent," he said, "have you ever done anything in this life of which you repent?"

No quick-witted woman could mistake the meaning apparent

in his tone and eyes, neither did Margaret, but she attempted to turn it off lightly.

"Oh, I suppose we all should like to have our lives over again and live them differently, but I don't suppose if we did we should be any more content."

"Perhaps you don't know it, though every one else in the place does: my unfortunate wife is addicted to alcohol and—well, perhaps you can imagine what my life is."

Margaret was silent for some minutes, and busily occupied herself in rooting up a tiny maidenhair from a crevice in the stones. At last she spoke.

"What is the good of my saying anything, Mr. Straight? In cases like this words of sympathy seem useless. Were I to tell you that we all have our trials it would seem like a sermon, but you *know* I feel for you. My own life has not been all roses. Women envy me, my diamonds and my riches, but I would gladly give all I possess to be free. In the old days, I often felt the sting of poverty, but I was far happier then."

"Happiness! Yes, it is what every one longs for. It is withheld from us until just too late; and then an ironical fate holds up a picture of 'what might have been' to us."

"Is one ever happy? It is a condition that is always in the future: blue roses, which appear in our dreams; we smell the perfume, we stretch out our hands to pick them—and we wake."

"Then you think we are creatures of circumstance, and have to endure what the gods send us?"

"I don't quite know what I think. But one thing seems pretty clear, and that is our duty. We have to do that, and not think about ideals and what might have been."

"And sacrifice one's youth, life, prospects, love, anything and everything that makes life worth living to a fetish called duty! For devout people who look upon this earth as a vale of tears, and expect a substantial future reward for their virtues, that may do! But for us! Have any really great people ever allowed themselves to be bound down by such miserably conventional rules? Where would French literature have been if Georges Sand had remained a slave to her drunken husband? Who is there, except your ultra-pious folk, who blame George Eliot's union with Lewes? Margaret," and Straight seized her hand "you know, you can't be blind, how I love you. I have done

so ever since the first day we met. I believe you care for me a little. I daresay I have been a selfish, good-for-nothing fellow, but for your sake I could do anything. Your life is as miserable as mine. What sort of affection or respect can bind me to my wretched wife? In a few years she will have drunk herself to death. For God's sake, Margaret, don't let such things stand in the way of our happiness."

Mrs. Trent drew her hand away. "I wonder," she said quietly, "if you know what you are asking? Suppose I were to consent to leave my husband for you, what would be the consequence? You would have to give up your appointment; your future career would be ruined."

"That!" exclaimed Douglas quickly. "Do you think there is anything in the world I would not give up gladly for your sake? We would leave this hard-working, dreary world and find some place where, away from every one, we would live for each other."

"And how long do you suppose that would last?" she asked. "A home in some Greek island might be a paradise for a few weeks, but after? You would regret your lost position in the world, the aims and future you had cast away. Life would become intolerable. I should see you tired of me, and unable to get rid of me, and my position would be worse. Douglas, believe me, I care too much about you to listen to your words. We both have our lives to go through and our duty to do; you to your wife, I to my husband. Let us forget to-day. I want a friend; be that to me, and let us put love out of the question."

"A friend! when I love you beyond everything else in the world!"

"Then I must never see you again."

"Anything but that. Margaret, I promise I will not say another word of love if you will only continue to let me see you. Otherwise life would be unbearable. But, all the same, it does seem a cruel thing that our happiness should be wrecked for the sake of that bugbear 'duty.'"

The sun had just disappeared behind a bank of clouds, and Mrs. Trent rose to go; turning to Straight with a faint smile, she said:

"Duty is hard, but, believe me, it is right. 'There may be

heaven, there must be hell; in the meantime there is our life here. Well?"

"I call it a beastly shame," said Harry Vernon. "Straight leaves his wife alone to the tender mercies of that old Gorgon, Miss Webb, and is for ever dancing attendance on that Trent woman, and takes very good care to let every one know that he considers himself thrown away, misunderstood, &c."

"What will you?" remarked his companion, shrugging his shoulders. "I have the greatest sympathy for poor Mrs. Straight, but she must be a great trial to her husband."

"Well, you may look at it in that light, but from the very first he always neglected her, and was always about with some one else, and if that isn't enough to make anybody take to drink, I don't know what is!"

This conversation took place in the smoking-room of the Embassy. A reception was in full swing, and Mrs. Trent's beauty and diamonds were among the principal topics of conversation.

"Seen the Australian this evening?" inquired a third man joining them. "He looks like a bear with a sore head. What on earth do women like Mrs. Trent marry such cads for?"

"Diamonds, that's about the figure," replied the first man. "By Jove! she is a ripper, though. If I were a beauty married to a creature like that, I'd——"

"Straight's a lucky fellow," chimed in the last comer. "Mrs. Trent is giving him a liberal education. Lucky in love, unlucky in marriage," he continued. "If I'd a wife given to tippling, I'd wring her neck."

"Look here, you fellows," exclaimed Harry Vernon, who had been listening to these remarks with rising anger, "Mrs. Straight happens to be a particular friend of mine. Talk about women being down on each other, men are ever so much worse."

CHAPTER X.

"Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ."—*Othello*, Act iii., Sc. 3.

THE sun was streaming in at the Trents' rooms in the Via Nazionale, flooding the pretty breakfast table and the hundred and one rare objects that the rich Australian and his wife had gathered about them in the course of their wanderings. There were roses on the table and through the open window was wafted the delicate scent of the lilies and verbenas on the balcony.

It was a perfect morning early in April, when Italy is at its brightest and best; but the grace and charm of his surroundings awakened no responsive echo in John Trent's heart. He sat opposite his wife's vacant chair at the breakfast-table, mechanically sorting out her letters from his. They had been up late the night before at the opera, and Margaret was still in her room. Presently he came to a note for her, which deepened the set expression of his face.

"How many times have I seen that writing within the last month?" he muttered to himself. Then he rose, poured out a cup of tea for his wife, gathered up her letters and took them in to her.

She was lying with half-closed eyes, looking, as Trent thought, very beautiful. He paused a moment to gaze on her. As Margaret turned her eyes on her husband a troubled expression filled them.

"Something has vexed you, John; you don't look yourself. What is it?"

"Nothing, Margaret, nothing. The usual business worries and late hours," he added with a forced smile.

Putting down the tea and her letters, he kissed her. Then he went back to his solitary meal. Outside was the stir and bustle of the city, the hawkers with their quaint cries, the happy-go-lucky drivers cracking their whips, the flower-girls vending their fragrant bouquets. John Trent left the table and looked out.

The shops were bright with Easter wares, the pavements thronged with a happy careless crowd; the air full of laughter and echoing quip and jest in the soft Roman speech. John Trent saw and heard none of these things.

His thoughts were far away in one of the hot stifling streets of a great Australian town, in the house where he first met his wife.

He had been successful in his wooing, as in most other undertakings of his life. The man of small beginnings, who had become by hard toil and sagacious enterprise the owner of thousands, had crowned his life with a marriage a king might envy. So he thought then, and now it was to him but gall and bitterness. It had come upon him gradually, as such things do. Looking back upon it all he could not blame his wife. The young and penniless governess had been frank with him. She liked and respected him, of love she could not speak. She had even hinted at some early attachment that had ended sadly. But the rough bush squatter was content, more than content. He married her, and lavished on his young wife all that wealth could give. If he never won her love he enjoyed at least the companionship of a singularly sweet and gentle nature, and until the last few months his happiness was practically undisturbed. He was not a man of nerves and emotions. He was rich and successful and had a beautiful wife. That was enough. But now this man had come between them—this Douglas Straight—a man of her own class, sharing her tastes, feelings and aspirations. There was a common bond of sympathy between them that he had never shared with his wife, and never would.

Straight's own wretched wife was a curse and a clog on him. He and Margaret Trent had become inseparable. It was the talk, in a polite *sotto voce*, of Rome. Trent was the last to realize the facts, as is the rule with those in his position. His old uncanny suspicions had passed away in the whirl of business and travel. At last his eyes were opened.

Some days before there had been a luncheon party at the Straights', at which Trent and wife were present. A little music and singing followed. Douglas Straight, who had a voice above the average, was induced to sing. He chose the whimsical little

ditty, "*Conosci tu il paese?*" and had just finished the second verse :

"Dost know that land beatic,
That kens no priestly chatter,
Nor ritual erratic,
Nor poetaster's patter ?
Where rise no prisons loathèd,
Where blooms no soldier's laurel,
And where the new-betrothèd
Ne'er have a lovers' quarrel."

The half-mocking words had barely died away when Mrs. Straight rose and, choking down a hysterical sob, left the room. Straight merely followed her with his eyes—a hard, cruel light in them. Recovering himself, he made some formal excuse for his wife's indisposition, and stooped over Margaret to recover his music. Trent happened to turn his eyes from the door to the piano as Straight did so. He noticed that Margaret's face was turned upwards with a look full of pity on it, and that as Douglas Straight bent forward he nearly touched her forehead with his lips.

The party soon broke up and Trent sought an explanation from his wife. He knew her loyal nature too well to discredit her statements, and he made her no reproaches ; but he never forgot that scene, and he felt that the light of his life had been clouded over for ever. Telling Margaret that he was going out on business and would not be back to lunch, he now went to the bank, and after calling at several places of business, finished the day by writing letters.

In the evening they went to the theatre with Douglas Straight and Lady Mary Lumley, a great friend of Mrs. Trent's, who good-naturedly completed the party in the absence of Mrs. Straight. The piece was "*Il Trovatore*," after which they adjourned to the *Caffé Roma*, where Straight was to give them supper.

The evening somehow dragged. Straight seemed hipped, Margaret ill at ease at dinner and at the theatre. Trent was silent and absent-minded. Even merry, rattling Lady Mary could not bring mirth to the party.

They were now sitting round the table, the two ladies sipping their coffee, Trent and Douglas smoking. Presently Trent hailed a passing waiter and ordered a brandy and soda. The man brought a liqueur bottle full of brandy and Trent helped himself.

Straight was sitting opposite to him, lolling back in his chair, his cigarette at such an angle between his teeth as almost to touch his nose. He was watching Trent, his eyes half-closed, an ill-concealed sneer on his face.

"Isn't that a rather stiff peg?" he drawled out.

The long tumbler was indeed one-third full of brandy.

"Perhaps it is," replied Trent, as he added a little soda. "Perhaps I have a stiff piece of work before me."

Then, looking across at his wife, he raised the glass and, with the words, "Your health and happiness," emptied it.

Lady Mary began talking rapidly to Margaret.

Murmuring something about "seeing after the carriage," Trent went out.

A couple of minutes later the report of a pistol was heard.

The supper party sprang to their feet and rushed out with one accord.

They found John Trent lying stone dead on the marble floor of the vestibule, with a bullet through his head.

CHAPTER XI.

"I only feel—Farewell!—Farewell!"—*Byron.*

It was a week after the tragedy, and Straight, who had not seen Margaret except at the inquest, and had purposely kept away from her, felt he could not do so much longer. John Trent's death had been sudden and dreadful, but the first shock over, Douglas put sentiment away and looked at the position as it affected himself.

In this world, at any rate, there is no such thing as disinterested affection; all love and all passion is pure selfishness; we love people in the degree that they minister to our wants, and Straight recognizing the force of this, rejoiced that one obstacle was removed from his path. By-and-bye, when the first shock was over, Margaret would listen to reason. She loved him, that was a great step in his favour, and she might at last be persuaded to come to him.

Alice was welcome to a divorce; he would supply her with necessary funds, and make her a liberal allowance for the future. He could then marry Margaret and begin life on a new basis. Things stood on quite a different footing now. There need be

no hurried flight and burying one's self and one's talents in some remote place. Public sympathy would be with him, and once married the past would be soon forgotten. True he would have to resign his appointment in the F. O., but that was inevitable in any case. Indeed, during the past few weeks it had been broadly hinted to him that his resignation would be eminently acceptable, and failing that, he might expect a transfer at no very distant date to the utmost limits of civilization.

What matter, though! He had attained the summit of his desires (so he thought), and it is not given to many to do that in this vale of tears. He was young, well off, and the world was all before him. With Margaret as his guiding star he would carve himself out a new career and forget the old life for ever.

Reasoning thus Straight wended his way to the house in the Via Nazionale. Intent on his thoughts he did not notice that the blinds were down, and the carefully-kept staircase had an untidy, deserted air.

An old woman answered his ring.

"Was the signora at home? What! did not the signor know? The signora had left Rome the day before."

"Left Rome? Margaret gone? Impossible! Gone without letting him know," and Straight muttered a curse.

"Yes, Signora Trent had gone, but she had left a letter to be given to Signor Straight in case he called," and the old woman hobbled away to fetch it.

After what seemed an eternity to Straight, she returned. He tore off the cover impatiently. The letter, which contained but a few lines, had no beginning.

"Do not attempt to follow me," he read; "all efforts to find me will be useless. We must never meet again. Indeed I ought to have left Rome long ago. Return to your wife. Be kind to her for she loves you. May the world go well with you, and forget the existence of—

"MARGARET TRENT."

Douglas read the few blotted words over and over again, and set his teeth as he did so. Was ever loser content with the loss of the game? Forget *her*! He would follow her to the ends of the earth and rouse heaven and hell to find her.

In order to set about this at once he went home. Alice was sitting in the *salon* as he went in. She was looking better than usual, a light in her eyes that had not been there for many days ; she had on her smartest dress, and her pretty fair hair piled about her head in the latest fashion, fresh from the hands of a celebrated hairdresser.

"Douglas, I'm so glad you have come back early. I want you to take me for a drive, and then——"

But Straight did not look at her.

"Where's Pietro?" he asked. "I'm going away at once."

"Away! What do you mean?"

"Yes, away. You'll find some money there," and he threw her his pocket-book. "You had better make arrangements to go to your mother. I will write in a day or two."

"Douglas! For heaven's sake what do you mean?" she cried, claspng his arm. "Why am I to go? Oh, I know I have not made you a good wife, but now it is different. -You *were* unkind before, but now we will lead a new life. I will never, never touch any spirits again. I love you, Douglas, so much, and will do anything in the world for you—anything, Douglas."

But he shook her off roughly.

"Too late. Don't be a fool, Alice ; we must look things in the face. It is no good ; we can never live together again. Best go to your mother ; you shall have an ample allowance."

"Allowance! Money! In place of you, Douglas! Do please forgive me this once?"

But he only shook his head.

"Oh, I know now ; it is that woman you are going to. That woman who stole your love from me. How I hate her. And you want to go to her! She is a murderess, too ; she murdered her husband if any one ever did."

"Silence!" said Straight in a very low voice and seizing his wife's wrists. "If you dare to say another word against *her*!"

But misery had made Alice reckless.

"She is a liar, too. She promised me she would leave Rome and has not done so."

"What do you know about it?" exclaimed Douglas. "If you have driven away the only woman I ever loved, it will be the worse for you."

Alice instinctively put her hand in her pocket and Straight

seized it. There was a short struggle and he succeeded in wrenching a paper from it.

Alice covered her face with her hands and fell sobbing into a chair.

Straight opened what appeared to be the rough draft of a letter and read :

"MRS. TRENT,

"Before my husband saw your face I was a happy woman, and then you came between us and stole his love. Is it right? Is it generous? You, who have everything you want, everybody who sees you loves you. Could you not have found some one else and left Douglas alone? Your husband is dead, and they all say it was on account of your flirting he shot himself. If you have any feeling or any remorse you will go, and leave me my husband. Surely you have done mischief enough. If he never sees you again, he will forget you in time, and come back to his wife."

CHAPTER XII.

"Rest her soul."

Hamlet, Act v. Sc. 1.

NEXT day Straight sent in his papers. There was only one alternative. He might have effected a transfer to some other embassy, for after the scandal of Trent's suicide, to remain in Rome became impossible. Wherever he might go, however, his wife's failing would render his social position untenable. The one consolation that might have induced him to face matters and live them down had now failed him. The one woman whom he could love had left him for ever. Douglas Straight decided to throw up his career and seek diversion and temporary oblivion in travel.

He briefly informed Alice of his decision, and consented to her earnest entreaty to be allowed to accompany him instead of returning to her mother.

Since the discovery of her letter to Mrs. Trent, she had been in a state of nervous collapse, and in her unexpected delight at being allowed to remain with her husband, ventured two other timid requests. One was that Miss Webb's further services

might be dispensed with. Straight with a grim smile at once assented. The lady's presence added no pleasure to that dreary *ménage*, and certain plans for his wife's future would, if anything, be advanced by her dismissal.

This was speedily effected, with a few words of polite explanation and a handsome cheque equivalent to three months' salary.

On the other hand, Alice tearfully clung to Francesca. The girl had, from the circumstances, become more her companion than her maid. Broken in body and mind, Alice shrank from the idea of saying farewell to the one creature who was uniformly kind and forbearing, and of facing a long journey alone with the husband who despised and hated her. Straight would have preferred to have engaged in London some new attendant ignorant of the secrets of his household, and Francesca's attachment to his wife was no special recommendation to him. Indeed he already felt a certain growing dislike to the girl, probably due to this cause.

Still, it was something to have about his wife a woman who knew her ways, and, whether from this consideration or from a faint semi-conscious echo of past tenderness, he told his wife that it should be as she desired.

No time was lost in winding up his affairs in Rome. The few farewell calls were soon paid, and within three days the party were on their way to London, *en route* for the West Indies.

Straight had telegraphed, securing berths on one of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's vessels, which was about to leave Liverpool on a three months' cruise.

His first step on going on board was to interview the ship's doctor, a very young Scotchman, neither better nor worse qualified than most men of his class, and with the advantage of a well-bred bearing and sympathetic manner. In a few words Straight explained the situation, laying some stress on the dictum of Sir Edward Nettleby in regard to the case. He hinted that he feared the vigilance insisted on by the great physician had in some mysterious way been eluded.

Dr. Macdonald looked grave and remarked that that was not altogether unknown in such cases. After seeing his patient he looked graver still; prescribed a sedative, and impressed upon Straight that his wife was, he feared, in a very precarious state.

The ship was now under way, and as they steamed down the Mersey, the contrast between the voyage on which he was now setting out and that on which he met Margaret Trent rose to his mind.

How bright and full of sunshine had been that time with her ; how sympathetic, how gentle, how beautiful she was. And he was sailing away from her now with this miserable incubus upon him. Only to be free, and he would search all the world until he found the one being on earth that could make his life complete.

The voyage proceeded on its dull and irksome course. Never, Straight thought, had so many common-place people been cooped up together on board a ship. He took no notice of any one, which, under the circumstances, excited no remark ; and if it had, Douglas Straight was the last person in the world to care one way or the other. He spent his time in reading or pretending to read—for his thoughts were elsewhere—and in smoking innumerable cigarettes.

One day the doctor drew him quietly aside.

"Had Mr. Straight any suspicions of the Italian maid?"

"In what possible way?"

The doctor explained. He had himself issued the very strictest orders, and though stewards and stewardesses are human, and therefore venial, he believed in this case his injunctions regarding liquor had been obeyed. But, as Mr. Straight knew, there was in these sad cases a very great craving for liquor. Was it possible that Francesca, who seemed so attached to her mistress, secretly gratified her craving?

"No," Straight replied, "he had no special reason to suspect the maid." But he added coldly, "I cannot personally ransack a lady's trunks." And Straight returned to his novel and his cigarettes.

The end came sooner than was anticipated. One morning, three days out from the Bahamas, he was summoned to the cabin in which Alice had lain since the beginning of the voyage. From a high state of excitability in which she had passed the previous day and a greater portion of the night, she had passed to a condition of general collapse, and was now sinking rapidly.

She was roused to receive her husband's visit, and the two were left alone.

Alice's lack-lustre eyes brightened for a moment as Douglas came towards her.

"They tell me I am going, Douglas," she said in her weak voice, as he bent over her. "I want to say good-bye. I've been a poor wife to you, Douglas, darling, but you will soon be free. Kiss me just once, as you did long ago."

The last words were almost inaudible ; the thin arms unclosed their feeble grasp, and all was over.

She was buried at sundown Douglas Straight was free from his incubus.

At the dull splash of the shotted coffin he looked up and noticed the eyes of Francesca fixed upon him with a curious, questioning expression in them.

Sympathetic ladies on board remarked that Mr. Straight evidently felt his wife's death very keenly. He looked quite ten years older.

(To be concluded.)